

Bostonia

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF BOSTON UNIVERSITY | FALL 2023



BU NAMES 11TH PRESIDENT

MELISSA L. GILLIAM,
PHYSICIAN, EDUCATOR,
SCHOLAR: "I LEAD
BY LISTENING."



THREE ALUMNI
AUTHORS SPEAK
OUT ON LGBTQ+
BOOK BANS

EXCERPT FROM
AN ACCLAIMED
NEW BIOGRAPHY
HIGHLIGHTS MLK'S
TIME AT BU

ALUM D. BRENTON
SIMONS LEADS THE
WAY IN THIS GOLDEN
AGE OF GENEALOGY

RACISM, SEXISM, AND THE BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH CRISIS

We go inside the largest and longest-running
study of Black women's health, led by BU

Scholarships create a ripple effect.

"It's mind-blowing how much the scholarship has been a stress reliever, and I greatly appreciate it. It's put much less pressure on me to find the most lucrative internships and gives me hope for my future."

-Syndia Iglesias (Questrom'24)

Syndia is studying management information systems and data science and looks forward to putting her education to work in the tech industry. With family roots in Spain and Cuba, she especially appreciates BU's diverse community of international students and its rich variety of programs.



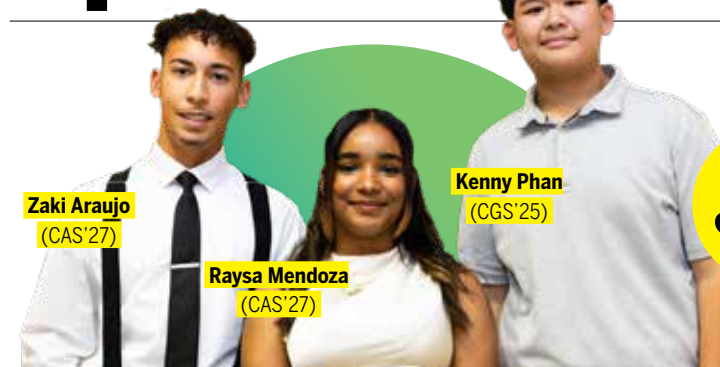
You could be the start of something big.

Support students today with a gift toward scholarships at bu.edu/scholarships24.



tip sheet

FACTS, FIGURES, AND HUMBLEBRAGS



50

BU's Thomas M. Menino Scholarship program—which has awarded more than \$205 million in financial support to Boston Public Schools graduates attending BU—turns 50! In September, 80 Menino Scholars, like Zaki Araujo (CAS'27), and BU Community Service Award winners, like Raysa Mendoza (CAS'27) and Kenny Phan (CGS'25), were celebrated.

JAZZED ABOUT BU'S JENGA BUILDING

Everyone's got an opinion—good and bad—about the design of BU's new Center for Computing & Data Sciences, which has been compared to a pile of books and a stack of Jenga blocks. This one's good: the building has been named a 2023 World Architecture Festival finalist. Next, the finalists will present their projects before a panel of judges in Singapore from November 29 to December 1.

WORLD ARCHITECTURE FESTIVAL FINALIST



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: JAKE BELCHER, JACIE RICCIARDI, SIPA USA/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, IMAGE PRESS AGENCY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, CYDNEY SCOTT, ANDREW RYBACK PHOTOGRAPHY



JUMP FOR JOY

Elizabeth Nevins (CAS'23, Sargent'23), who was a member of BU's club equestrian team and was captain her senior year, won the Cacchione Cup at the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association National Championship, held in Lexington, Ky., in May. The cup is the first-place prize for an individual rider.

10,000

TERRIERS

Jay Zagorsky, a Questrom School of Business clinical associate professor of markets, public policy, and law, marked a milestone this past summer: he's taught 10,000 BU students. His first class, as a new PhD student, was in the fall of 1987.



"BU students are still smart, curious, and a lot of fun to teach."

Jay Zagorsky

PODCASTING POWER PLAYERS

Alexandra Cooper (CGS'15, COM'17) and Bill Simmons (COM'93) were named to the *Hollywood Reporter's* list of the 40(ish) Most Important People in Podcasting in 2023. Cooper, a media exec who also made the 2023 *Time* 100 Next list, is the host and producer of the podcast *Call Her Daddy*. Simmons is founder and managing director of The Ringer, a sports and culture company with a network of more than 50 podcasts.

Alexandra Cooper (CGS'15, COM'17)

Bill Simmons (COM'93)



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COVER PHOTO BY CHRIS SORENSEN

ON THE WEB

bu.edu/bostonia

Read more about Melissa L. Gilliam and watch a video interview with her; watch a video about master fly tyer and alum Scott Biron; and find a recipe for Fig & Pomegranate Brisket from alum Adeena Sussman's new cookbook, *Shabbat*.

► MELISSA L. GILLIAM WILL COME TO BU FROM ONE OF THE LARGEST PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE COUNTRY, WITH 15 COLLEGES, MORE THAN 7,500 FACULTY MEMBERS, AND OVER 60,000 STUDENTS ACROSS 6 CAMPUSES. "I LEAD BY LISTENING, COLLABORATING, AND EMPOWERING OTHER PEOPLE," SHE SAYS.

JANICE CHECCHIO

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Telephone: 617-353-3081 Email: bostonia@bu.edu
Web: bu.edu/bostonia

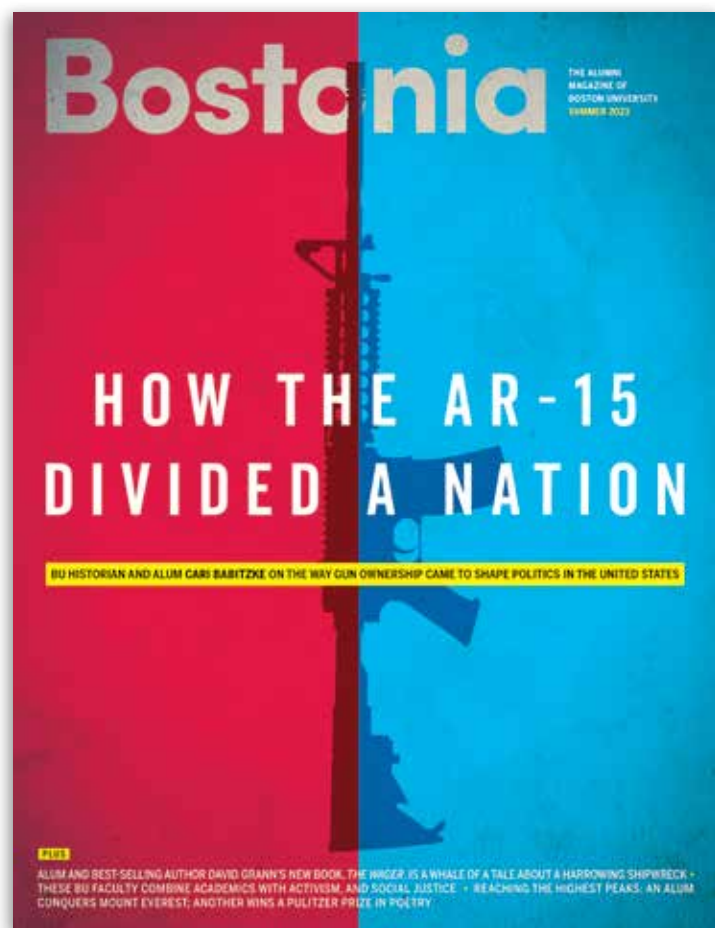
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BOSTON
UNIVERSITY

feedback.



The US and the AR-15

KUDOS TO Ms. Molly Callahan for her remarkable story based on the research of Cari Babitzke (GRS'22,'22) ("How the AR-15 Divided a Nation," Summer 2023). She took one of the most contentious and perplexing subjects of our time and made it comprehensible. That was no mean feat, and it is a tribute to her gifted talent as a writer.

A special note of thanks to Professor Babitzke for her integrity, courage, and, quite simply, her guts in researching this deeply troubling schism regarding the AR-15, which has, as the title so perfectly denoted, "divided a nation."

Patricia Lutwack Bloom (CAS'65) | Blaine, Wash.

I READ THE article "How the AR-15 Divided a Nation" and felt compelled to respond. The AR-15 didn't divide a nation. Power and arrogance did. If one wanted to change the legal standing of gun ownership in America, you must amend the Second Amendment to the Constitution. The founders provided a method in Article V of the Constitution to do just that, foreseeing a need to adapt and change in the future. Through this process, the Second Amendment would either be changed according to the Constitution or it would not, based on the will of the people through their elected representatives at the state

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level. And the "will of the people" is a basic principle of American politics, or it used to be.

To the best of my knowledge, this has never been proposed. Instead, efforts to circumvent the Constitution were tried to force a change and bypass the Article V process. I believe this was done out of the arrogant and elitist assumption that "We know what's best and you should just accept that and comply." This attempt to make what is essentially a dictated change to the Constitution *without* the involvement of the people is the problem. Those proposing a mandated change seek the power to overrule the Constitution in favor of, if not a popular opinion, at least a loud one. I see this effort as an attack on the Constitution and, through that, our system of government.

The Constitution is an owner's manual that tells us how our government is supposed to work and, when most of us think it doesn't, how to fix that. When a group of people decide their "idea" is so great and their judgment so superior that it allows them to ignore the law, that is the first step toward anarchy, much like we see today. Put it to the Article V process, let the states decide, and amend—or not—the Constitution.

I say it has nothing to do with the AR-15 because it's actually an effort to minimize the impact of the Constitution on the conduct of government in order to allow more mandates that do not include the "will of the people." The division is between those who support the Constitution as the foundation of our Republic and those who do not. If it wasn't the AR-15, it would be free speech or the right to assemble or something else to be changed based on decree. Firearms are just a convenient means to an end.

Roger Perkins (CAS'87) | Wilson, N.C.



Activism and BU Faculty

THANK YOU for the article in the summer issue highlighting the activism and community-engaged scholarship that several BU professors are engaged in ("Beyond the Classroom," Summer 2023). As a professor myself at a research-intensive university, I know how this kind of work is often undervalued and not rewarded in the tenure and promotion processes, so it's nice to see it featured in *Bostonia*. I hope it is also valued by the administration for the important contributions it makes to both the University and the broader community.

Audrey Lucero (CAS'96, COM'96)
Associate Professor, Education Studies
Director, Latinx Studies
University of Oregon



Praise for Alum Author David Grann

YOUR INTERVIEW with David Grann (GRS'94) and info on the release of the movie *Killers of the Flower Moon* ("Master Thriller," Summer 2023) brought me back to the feelings of shock and horror I had several years ago when I read the book. I am a native of Oklahoma and I do not recall either the Osage murders or the Tulsa race riot of 1921 being taught in my history classes in high school or at the University of Oklahoma.

Until now, the only Hollywood depiction of the injustices against the Osage is a brief scene in the 1950s movie *The FBI Story*, starring Jimmy Stewart. So, thank you, David Grann!

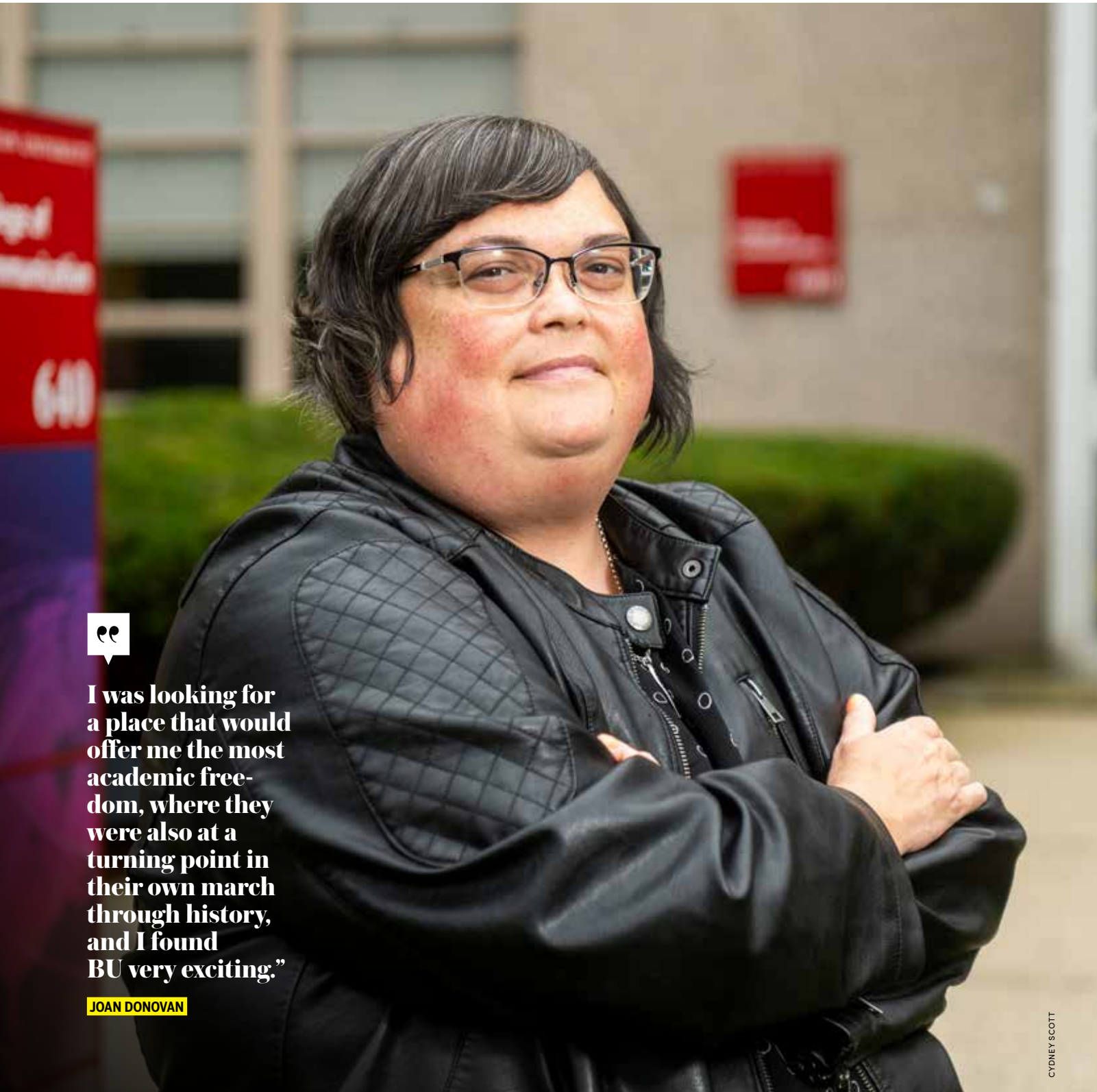
Joe D. Marlow (Wheelock'78)
Olathe, Kans.

one moment.

► **THE CUTE** and charismatic clownfish had its close-up in the 2003 Disney film *Finding Nemo*. But the bright orange and white fish are the stars of more serious work at BU: the research of Peter Buston, director of the BU Marine Program, who has been studying the reef dwellers for 25 years. While Buston, a College of Arts & Sciences associate professor of biology, and his team occasionally travel to Papua New Guinea to study clownfish in the wild, he houses about 60 pairs in his lab on campus—like the one that was kind enough to pose for us here. Clownfish live in social groups made up of two breeders—a female and a male—and up to four nonbreeders. Buston and his lab are investigating why some individuals forgo their own reproduction and help others to reproduce, waiting peacefully for many years to become breeders. The lab's work has provided new insights into the evolution of animal societies. Buston says clownfish are one of the easiest marine fish to work with in the field and in the lab—and he finds their biology fascinating.

PHOTO BY CYDNEY SCOTT





CYDNEY SCOTT



I was looking for a place that would offer me the most academic freedom, where they were also at a turning point in their own march through history, and I found BU very exciting.”

JOAN DONOVAN

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED EXPERT IN MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION JOINS BU FACULTY

► After departure from Harvard, Joan Donovan to hold joint appointments in journalism department and Division of Emerging Media Studies | BY MOLLY CALLAHAN

JOAN DONOVAN, a renowned expert in online misinformation and disinformation campaigns, joined Boston University this fall as an assistant professor in the College of Communication. She holds joint appointments in the Division of Emerging Media Studies and in the journalism department.

A social scientist by training, Donovan was most recently research director of the Technology and Social Change Project at the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School.

“I was looking for a place that would offer me the most academic freedom, where they were also at a turning point in their own march through history, and I found BU very exciting,” Donovan says of her move to the University.

During a pivotal and tumultuous time in global politics, University leaders say it’s critically important to understand—and overcome—online misinformation and disinformation campaigns that threaten real-world consequences.

“We’re excited that Joan Donovan, one of the foremost experts in misinformation, disinformation, and media manipulation, is joining Boston

University’s College of Communication,” says Mariette DiChristina (COM’86), dean of COM. “In an era of increasing polarization, and with a big election year coming up, Dr. Donovan’s work is more important than ever.”

Donovan’s work in misinformation and disinformation puts her in the middle of a dark web of online vitriol. She wades into cynical and sometimes downright violent posts by extremists and conspiracy theorists, often picking up on nascent movements and bad actors even before they gain mainstream attention.

“It can feel a little like trying to hold back a tidal wave with your own two hands,” she says.

In January 2020, Donovan testified before Congress during a hearing about manipulation and deception online, and in 2022 coauthored *Meme Wars: The Untold Story of the Online Battles*



Joan Donovan’s most recent book explores the political adoption of memes and how the internet is changing political campaigns.

Upending Democracy in America (Bloomsbury Publishing), which explores the political adoption of memes and how the internet is changing political campaigns.

Donovan will begin teaching in the spring, and says she’s eager to work with budding journalists at BU. “I feel like this work is just going to be that much more invigorating,” she says, “because journalists are more and more becoming the front lines of the information war.”

One of her first projects at the University will be to build out an internet observatory of everything nationally elected politicians post online. Together with a collaborator at McGill University, she hopes to create this living online archive for elected politicians around the world, beginning in the United States, Canada, India, and New Zealand.

“My hope is that in a couple of years we can get a law passed so that the National Archives will take this over and do it permanently,” she says. “And what that’s going to teach us is manifolds about online civic engagement—digital democracy, as it’s called—as well as the behaviors of politicians themselves, especially around particular wedge issues.”



Sociologist and Scholar Wants to Create a More Welcoming Campus

► Anthony Abraham Jack joins Wheelock faculty, BU center for first-gen students

THERE IS A LITANY of identifiers Anthony Abraham Jack uses to introduce himself to the world: Researcher. Educator. Honorary degree recipient. Student advocate. Home chef. Award-winning author. But Jack prefers to use the four that he says matter most: Sociologist. Keynote. First-gen. Knitter.

He has two more for consideration: associate professor in the Wheelock College of Education & Human Development educational leadership and policy studies program and faculty director of BU's Newbury Center—which serves and celebrates first-generation students on campus.

Jack, a well-known higher education researcher and author of the groundbreaking *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students* (Harvard University Press, 2019), started at BU in the fall, after working for the past seven years at Harvard. Maria Dykema Erb will continue as the Newbury Center director; she and Jack will run the center jointly.

"[Jack's] scholarship focuses on elite universities that have made an effort to make higher education accessible to first-generation students, but have not

always understood the specific needs of these students, particularly if they are poor or scholars of color," says David Chard, Wheelock dean. "His work has both added to our knowledge about marginalized college students and transformed policies and practices on university campuses."

A former first-gen college student, Jack says, "I lived the experiences that the people whom I learn from are going through. My life goal is not just to address problems in higher ed, but rather to use my research to [also] provide a framework for universities to live up to the missions they love to put in Latin on their seals and diplomas."

As a sociologist, he says, "I study education, but I'm fundamentally interested in how inequality and poverty shape young people's life chances. I study universities because I believe that they are, quite frankly, the greatest shot at not only creating mobility, but [also] creating a more equal society."

—Alene Bouranova

Read a Q&A with Anthony Abraham Jack at bu.edu/bostonia.



LUCY HUTYRA



BU ECOLOGIST WINS MACARTHUR "GENIUS GRANT"

► Lucy Hutyra is an expert on urban climate

BU CLIMATE expert Lucy Hutyra has been named a 2023 MacArthur Fellow, one of the most prestigious awards for scientists, researchers, writers, artists, entrepreneurs, scholars, and professionals in a broad range of fields. A College of Arts & Sciences professor of Earth and environment, Hutyra focuses on monitoring greenhouse gases in Massachusetts, studying how urban environments impact trees and carbon cycles, and advancing knowledge on how to meet climate action and emission reduction goals. She is one of 25 fellows whose names were announced October 3 by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Each fellow receives an \$800,000 no-strings-attached "genius grant," spread over five years.

"This is just about the greatest honor I can imagine receiving," Hutyra says. "To have my peers select me in such an anonymous and rigorous way highlights the impact of my group's work and the importance of focusing on climate solutions in cities. I'm very grateful." —Jessica Colarossi

COURTESY OF JOHN D. AND CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION (TOP), MICHAEL D. SPENCER



"The future is just so incredible," says Drew Weissman (CAMED'87, GRS'87, Hon.'23). "We've been thinking for years about everything that we could do with RNA, and now it's here."

ALUM WINS NOBEL PRIZE IN MEDICINE FOR BREAKTHROUGH LEADING TO COVID VACCINES

► Drew Weissman shares award with research partner Katalin Karikó for developing mRNA technology | BY BOSTONIA STAFF

PHYSICIAN AND SCIENTIST Drew Weissman, who earned both an MD and a PhD at Boston University, and his research collaborator, Katalin Karikó, won the 2023 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine on October 3 for their pioneering work developing the technology that powers the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. Those two vaccines are among the most widely distributed coronavirus vaccines worldwide. They are

being used in more than 200 countries to help contain the spread of the deadly virus that upended global society in early 2020 and has so far killed nearly 7 million people and infected nearly 770 million worldwide.

"The laureates contributed to the unprecedented rate of vaccine development during one of the greatest threats to human health in modern times," the Nobel committee said in a statement. The committee

Read *Bostonia's* 2021 profile of Drew Weissman at bu.edu/bostonia.

praised the scientists for their "groundbreaking findings" that "fundamentally changed our understanding of how mRNA interacts with our immune system."

"It's an incredible honor," says Weissman (CAMED'87, GRS'87, Hon.'23). "We couldn't have come to the result without both of us being involved." He adds, "The future is just so incredible. We've been thinking for years about everything that we could do with RNA, and now it's here."

Weissman, 64, who grew up in Lexington, Mass., did his undergraduate work at Brandeis University and his graduate work at BU, focusing on immunology and microbiology. He is a professor of medicine and the Roberts Family Professor in Vaccine Research at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine.

Weissman and Karikó, 68, a biotech executive, researched so-called messenger RNA, or mRNA, a molecule essential in protein production. While Weissman's research dates back to the 1990s, the breakthrough by the two came in 2005, when they discovered that adding altered mRNA to cells could trigger production of any desired protein—a feat that could revolutionize therapeutics and vaccines to treat and prevent devastating diseases and infections.

To create immunity against the SARS-CoV-2 virus responsible for COVID infections, mRNA vaccines instruct cells to make the

coronavirus' hallmark "spike" proteins. Those proteins nestle on the surface of the virus, causing COVID; when a person's immune system detects the protein on a cell's surface, it makes antibodies that protect against COVID. The mRNA vaccines trigger the body into producing those spike proteins, and the antibodies necessary to destroy them, thus providing protection against coronavirus without risking the health consequences of having to build immunity by catching the virus itself.

Weissman and Karikó's paper about their discovery was initially rejected by several scientific publications. When *Immunity* published it in 2005, few scientists took notice. Finally, Moderna and German firm BioNTech used the mRNA technology to research vaccines. Then COVID-19 struck in late 2019, and the rest became Nobel history.

Speaking to *Bostonia* in 2021, Weissman reflected on the day when he and Karikó received their own vaccine shots together, in December 2020: "It was an emotional moment. There were a lot of down times, a lot of soul-searching, a lot of figuring out why things weren't working. But we never lost hope because we both saw the incredible potential that mRNA had."

The Nobel Prizes, including prize money, will be awarded December 10, 2023, in Stockholm.

The Associated Press contributed to this article.

>>



ANTHONY ABRAHAM JACK

once a first-generation college student himself, is a higher education researcher. He started at BU in the fall, after working at Harvard for the past seven years.

FRUITFUL FIRST YEAR FOR CENTER ON FORCED DISPLACEMENT

► Seed grants, a conference, a workshop, and other programs, plus two \$1 million gifts | BY JACOB STRAUTMANN

BY ALL MEASURES, Boston University's Center on Forced Displacement (CFD)—founded in July 2022 to foster interdisciplinary research and engagement on one of the most pressing challenges of our time—had a banner first year.

The CFD began providing seed grants to BU faculty researchers across multiple disciplines in arts, humanities, law, social work, and public health, hosted a first artist-in-residence, recorded podcasts, and held a workshop to prepare STEM students to address forced displacement challenges. This past spring,

the center held the first of what will be an annual conference, with keynote speaker and renowned

Nobel Prize-winning novelist Abdulrazak Gurnah (center) speaks with BU professors Muhammad Zaman and Carrie Preston at the Boston University Center on Forced Displacement's first conference on Research, Art, and Activism in April.

novelist Abdulrazak Gurnah, who won the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature. It continued its Border Studies Program at the US-Mexico border, and launched its first Interdisciplinary Summer School on Forced Displacement at the University of Belgrade.

Now, the CFD is the recipient of two new \$1 million gifts. One is from Feyza A. Shipley and Richard C. Shipley (Questrom'68;'72, Hon.'22), a BU trustee emeritus; the other was given anonymously. The gifts will be used to fund experiential learning opportunities for students, as well as fieldwork and ethical research projects with communities on the ground to inform responses to forced migration issues.

"We take great pride in the interdisciplinarity of our work," says Muhammad Zaman, CFD cofounder

and director and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Professor of Biomedical Engineering and International Health. "Grants are often designated for a specific activity, but the center's activities are often working at the intersection of different fields. We believe a chemistry student should be working with a history student should be working with someone who studied art and theater. You cannot separate health from the political aspect, the political aspect from the policy angle, or the historical aspects, and they all interweave. So, the flexibility that comes with these gifts is extraordinary, and allows us to really bridge and traverse these disciplinary boundaries."

Carrie Preston, CFD cofounder and associate director, says the effect of the gifts will ripple outward. "Because of these gifts, we were able to create a postdoc position, someone who will be working in Turkey, within the community," says Preston, a College of Arts & Sciences professor of English and of women's, gender, and sexuality studies. "Because of that posting, we were able to connect with students here at BU who had been living as refugees, or witnessing the refugee crises in their home countries, who reached out to us because they wanted to do something to help."

Shipley says his wife, Feyza, who has a passion for supporting displaced people, was a driving force behind the gift. "As all of us know, the challenges of forced displacement are huge," he says. "We have over 100 million people affected, and the number is increasing. It's a huge issue. So, when Feyza and I first met with Dr. Zaman and Dr. Preston, we were most interested in whether they could scale their mission on a global basis, and whether they could produce results. We were not interested in just an academic exercise."

"We never had to ask those questions," Shipley adds. "It became clear, as Dr. Zaman and Dr. Preston described the mission, that it was all about results and they were going to be able to leverage what they did on an international and a global scale."



THE BU TREBLEMAKERS, an all-gender a cappella group, released a new six-track EP in August, their first release since 2021. The EP, *CADENCE*, features a cappella arrangements of popular songs like "Before I Let Go" by Beyoncé, "erase me" by Lizzy McAlpine, and "Hypotheticals" by Lake Street Dive. Walter Nelson (CAS'24, COM'24), president of the BU Treblemakers, says the EP was inspired by the Class of 2023. "It's a proud moment for us," Nelson says. "But, in a lot of ways, it's a huge 'thank you' and a commemoration to that senior class who were the foundation for rebuilding the group after COVID and making it what it is today." Since their founding in 1996, the group (butreblemakers.com) has released eight studio albums and three EPs, and performs live on campus and all over Boston. —Sam Thomas (COM'24)

New Deans Appointed at School of Social Work and Sargent College

► SSW's Barbara Jones is a scholar of health affairs, Jack Dennerlein an expert in workplace safety

A BOSTON UNIVERSITY school and college both have new leadership this fall: Barbara Jones is the new dean of the School of Social Work and Jack Dennerlein helms Sargent College of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences.

Jones comes to BU from the University of Texas at Austin, where she was associate dean for health affairs at the University of Texas at Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work and chair of the department of health social work at its Dell Medical School. She succeeded Jorge Delva, who will join the SSW faculty after a sabbatical.

One of the nation's top scholars in the field of

psychosocial oncology and palliative care, she has held a number of national leadership roles. Her research focuses on finding better care for children, adolescents, and young adults with cancer and their families. More recently she has focused on palliative care, pediatric oncology social work interventions, and adolescent and young adult cancer survivors.

Jones says BU, routinely ranked among the top social work programs in the country, has long impressed her. Another draw, she says, was that two research centers here align with her own areas of interest and research: the Center for

Dennerlein came to BU by way of Northeastern University, where he was a professor and interim chair of physical therapy, movement, and rehabilitation sciences at its Bouvé College of Health Sciences.

Previously, Dennerlein spent 13 years on the faculty of the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health environmental health department, leading the Occupational Injury Prevention Research Training program.

He succeeds Christopher A. Moore, who retired at the end of the 2022–2023 academic year.

In Dennerlein, the University has hired a scholar with a national profile in improving workplace safety and creating best practices for employee health. A mechanical engineer by training, his research has informed the design of workplace ergonomics and improved safety for construction, healthcare, and transportation workers.



BARBARA JONES



JACK DENNERLEIN

Innovation in Social Work & Health and the Center for Aging & Disability Education & Research.



JACKIE RICCIARDI

FROM TOP: MIRANDA NICUSANTI, COURTESY OF BARBARA JONES, CYDNEY SCOTT

Your Schools & Colleges

WHEELOCK COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

WHEELOCK DEAN DAVID CHARD TO STEP DOWN

DAVID CHARD planned to serve as dean for only two years after the historic 2018 merger of Wheelock College and BU's School of Education. But as his time leading the newly formed Wheelock College of Education & Human Development as interim dean began to draw to a close, Chard realized he had more work to do in the role. In 2021, he was appointed permanent dean.

In the two years since, he's done what he set out to do. "In some ways, I wanted to get the college into a position that would be very attractive for the next dean to want to be here," he says. "I feel like I've accomplished almost everything I wanted to accomplish."

Chard will step down from his leadership position at the end of the 2023–2024 academic year. A faculty advisory committee will conduct a nationwide search for his successor.

Among Chard's accomplishments are increasing the college's student and faculty diversity, growing its graduate enrollment, expanding research funding, and raising the institution's international profile through programming in locations like Lesotho and Bahrain. He created high-profile named professorships in the areas of early childhood well-being and education innovation and hired new faculty members who are internationally renowned in their fields.

But it was the successful 2018 merger of two educational institutions that may be Chard's longest-lasting legacy. He shepherded a merger that resulted in the closure of historic Wheelock College, where he'd been president from 2016 to 2018. He then led faculty from both institutions in setting the strategy and vision of the newly formed college. —Steve Holt



CHOBANIAN & AVEDISIAN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

SHRUTI MISRA (CAMED'27) (front left) and Michelle Surets (CAMED'27), first-year BU medical students, are helped into white coats by Angela Jackson, an associate professor of medicine and associate dean of students, and Ebonie Woolcock (CAMED'10, SPH'10), an assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology and assistant dean for diversity and inclusion. Misra and Surets were among 146 students who attended the White Coat Ceremony on August 1, an annual rite of passage where each student is presented with a white lab coat as "visible evidence that you are joining this profession, taking your first steps along this path to a demanding, but so rewarding, career in medicine," Jackson said at the ceremony.

DAVID KEOUGH (TOP), DAVE GREEN

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION

COM STUDIOS GET MAJOR UPGRADES

WHEN COM students returned to campus in the fall, they found transformed studio spaces at the college and modern amenities that rival professional television stations. Mariette DiChristina (COM'86), dean of COM, earmarked half a million dollars this year for renovations to the studios and postproduction facilities.

The most dramatic changes can be seen in Studio West, used most frequently by BUTV10 but also by broadcast classes. Studio West—the scene of news and weather reports, interviews, and more—now features a new anchor desk, movable sets, monitors, and colored lighting to give students multiple angles and options to create customizable views. The overhauled control room has a new audio mixing board.

On one wall is a large screen that can be set to show a live look at the car and foot traffic on Comm Ave, or switched to display graphics. There's a green screen, where reporters will present weather reports or other graphics.

"These studio upgrades put our students in a state-of-the-art broadcast environment," says Tina McDuffie, a COM associate professor of the practice of journalism and co-advisor for BUTV10. "We are setting them up for newsrooms and broadcast studios when they graduate. The more fluid they are with technology, the more prepared they are to step right into internships and jobs." —Amy Laskowski



CARL STREED

CHOBANIAN & AVEDISIAN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

AN HONOR FOR OUTSTANDING LGBTQ+ HEALTHCARE

BU'S CARL STREED was honored with the 2023 Excellence in LGBTQ Health Award from the American Medical Association. The award recognizes physicians who are dedicated to patient care for underserved communities and who show compassion and altruism through their work.

Streed is an assistant professor of medicine and the research lead for the GenderCare Center at Boston Medical Center, the University's primary teaching hospital. The GenderCare Center provides gender-affirming care to help patients transition from the gender designated at birth to the gender they align with. It also works to advance education, research, and advocacy efforts across the state.

Streed's work as a physician aims to improve healthcare and well-being for LGBTQ+ individuals, especially transgender patients. "I chose to join the GenderCare Center because providing gender-affirming care brings joy to my patients' lives," he says, "and that nourishes my soul."

—Jessica Colarossi

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DOUG BIRKENHEUER, FLUXPIX / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, COURTESY OF BARBARA OPPENHEIMER, CYDNEY SCOTT



SARGENT COLLEGE OF HEALTH & REHABILITATION SCIENCES

RETIRED PROFESSOR BARBIE OPPENHEIMER'S BLOCKBUSTER SUMMER

IN 1980, Barbara Burrington married Donald Oppenheimer. Since then, she's been Barbara "Barbie" Oppenheimer—seriously—and with the release of the blockbuster movies, *Barbie* (inset) and *Oppenheimer*, this now-retired BU professor had a summer to remember.

"A couple of friends of mine reached out," she says. "I was like, 'What?! Oh, it hadn't occurred to me.' Then my sons reached out, and they were like, 'This is your time, Mom!'"

Most of Oppenheimer's professional career, about 35 years, was spent at BU, first as an adjunct professor, and then as a Sargent clinical associate professor of speech, language, and hearing sciences. She retired in 2020.

Her husband is in fact a distant relative of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist credited as being the "father of the atomic bomb" and the subject of the 2023 film. Until recently, her full name held no cultural significance.

Then, a cinema frenzy for that movie and *Barbie* made it a phenomenon—"Barbenheimer." Now, the Newton, Mass., grandmother of five can hardly say it out loud without getting a reaction. "The funniest part is that you go to the doctor's office and check in," she says. "I say, 'My name is Barbara Oppenheimer,' and they all say, 'We've been waiting for you to come. Was that really your name?'" —Doug Most

WHEELOCK, QUESTROM LAUNCH NEW DEGREES

BU'S NEW Social Impact MBA+MS in Energy & Environment dual degree program aims to prepare a new generation of leaders to help the energy industry navigate the massive transformations required to confront climate change, including moving away from fossil fuels.

The program is run jointly by the Questrom School of Business and the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. In two years, students get their MBA through Questrom's Social Impact MBA program and a Master of Science in energy and environment from the GRS Energy

& Environment program. (The dual degree program dates back several years, but its promotion was delayed by the pandemic and other factors.)

Wheelock College of Education & Human Development has added a new online master's program to its offerings: the Master of Education in Education for Equity & Social Justice, which began in the fall 2023 semester. The multidisciplinary program is offered fully online, but participants can take electives in person on BU campuses. The program takes one year to complete for full-time students (two years for part-time) and includes summer courses.

The new program, according to Wheelock, "prepares responsible, empowered, and civically engaged professionals to confront the consequences of systemic inequities" by setting up graduates for advisory or executive roles in education.

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

BOOK SHINES NEW LIGHT ON AMERICA BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR II



IN HER new book, BU historian Brooke L. Blower recounts the 1943 tragedy of Pan Am flight PA9035 and the lives of those on board the famed flying boat, named the *Yankee Clipper*. But the book, *Americans in a World at War: Intimate Histories*

from the *Crash of Pan Am's Yankee Clipper* (Oxford University Press, 2023), is about more than one deadly incident: it's a story of the intricate ways Americans were shaping—and shaped by—World War II, even before the United States officially entered the conflict.

"Since around the 1980s, Americans have really whittled down their depictions of World War II to focus overwhelmingly on combat soldiers storming beaches or Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt—the high diplomacy," says Blower, a CAS associate professor of history. "This is an attempt to help readers see the war in a new way, to remind them of the geographical, temporal, and political scope of the engagements Americans were involved with."

"It's a *Casablanca* World War II story rather than a *Saving Private Ryan* story."

The *Clipper*—the plane that inaugurated scheduled transatlantic passenger flights and that had been christened by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt just four years earlier—went down in Lisbon's Tagus River estuary. Of the 39 passengers and crew on board, only 15 would survive.

Blower picks six globally connected passengers to focus on, charting their lives, weaving their personal histories into the world's slide from one conflagration to another. She divides her narrative into four parts—World War I and its aftermath, two decades of relative peace, the start of World War II, and the year before the crash—breaking each with a short interlude to plot the *Yankee Clipper's* fateful journey. Along the way, she busts some sepia-tinted myths, starting with America's pre-Pearl Harbor isolationism.

BROOKE L. BLOWER



DAVID CHARD



OPPOSITE: TRIGGA/ISTOCK.COM; JACKIE RICCIARDI

“The idea that we can destroy [the natural world], or use it up...seems irreligious to me.”



REBECCA COPELAND,
an STH assistant
professor of theology

WHAT CAN THE BIBLE TEACH US ABOUT FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE?

► Christian teachings are full of lessons about caring for the planet and nature, and more American churchgoers should heed them, says BU theologian Rebecca Copeland | BY CORINNE STEINBRENNER

IN THE BIBLICAL book of Matthew, near the end of his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus asks his listeners to “consider the birds of the air.” But few readers of Matthew truly do, says Rebecca Copeland, a School of Theology assistant professor of theology.

Taking time to consider birds, their behavior, and their place in the food chain can offer readers of the Bible alternate ways to understand this well-known passage, Copeland argues in a paper in the journal *Biblical Interpretation*. Paying attention to the nonhuman characters in the Bible, she says, can also help individual Christians and their congregations incorporate a concern for the environment into their daily lives.

In her research and teaching, Copeland focuses on the intersection of ecology and theology: she examines

Christian texts and doctrines through an ecological lens, and explores ways Christian teachings can influence environmental activism. Her 2020 book, *Created Being: Expanding Creedal Christology* (Baylor University Press), is about the relationships among God, human and nonhuman creatures, and nature. In peer-reviewed papers, she’s studied human responses to animal suffering and the ancient cultural, economic, and ecological significance of fig trees (which Jesus curses as part of a lesson in the book of Matthew).

“When I started my theological studies,” Copeland says, “it bothered me that the rest of the world kind of gets ignored in most theological work—that Christian theology has a tendency to focus on human beings and human salvation and neglect everything else.”

But the idea that Christians should be paying attention to the natural world has been around for centuries, she says. Augustine of Hippo, a theologian and philosopher born in AD 354, for example, wrote of two ways to learn about God: through Scripture and through nature. This focus on nature isn’t often emphasized in modern American Christianity, Copeland says, but she believes today’s Christians should care about the natural world—and use their social and political influence to protect it.

“John 3:16 says that God loves the whole cosmos,” says Copeland, who also directs STH’s Faith & Ecological Justice Program, which helps students prepare to do faith-based ecological work. “And Genesis 1 repeatedly says that creation is very good. So, the idea that we can just destroy it, or use it

up, or neglect it seems irreligious to me.”

Many Christians do care deeply about the environment. Interfaith Power and Light, Creation Justice Ministries, the Evangelical Environmental Network, and other such groups mobilize Christians around environmental issues, including climate change. A recent survey by the Pew Research Center, however, paints a complicated picture of American Christians’ environmental views: while 82 percent of Christians completely or mostly agreed that God gave humans a duty to protect and care for the Earth, only 50 percent agreed that climate change is an extremely or very serious problem, and only 45 percent agreed that the planet is warming mostly because of human activity. (NASA reports 97 percent of actively publishing climate

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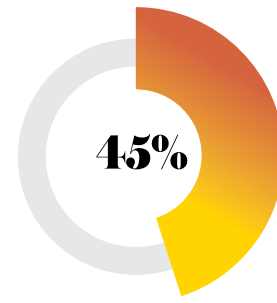
scientists believe humans are causing climate change.)

Copeland believes more Christians would accept and care about human-caused global warming if they heard more about the climate in their local congregations.

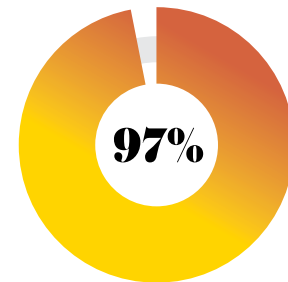
“The Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox Church, and almost all of the mainline Protestant churches have statements that say climate change is real, humans are causing it, and we have a responsibility to address this, but the research indicates that’s not filtering out—at least not in the US,” she says. “So, the Pope can say something, but if the parish priest doesn’t, and if there

aren’t congregation members bringing it into the life of the local community, it’s not making a difference there.”

Another way American Christian churches can encourage members’ interest in climate change, she says, is to foster conversations with people whose daily lives are more affected by its consequences—something that churches, which are often international organizations, are uniquely positioned to do. Many Americans think of the effects of global warming as existing in the distant future or in faraway places, Copeland says, but their perception of climate risk might



OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANS AGREE THAT THE PLANET IS WARMING MOSTLY BECAUSE OF HUMAN ACTIVITY



OF ACTIVELY PUBLISHING CLIMATE SCIENTISTS BELIEVE HUMANS ARE CAUSING CLIMATE CHANGE

change if, say, they belonged to a church that received regular environmental updates from sister congregations in other parts of the world.

The idea that human-caused environmental harms can lead to hunger and suffering may even be discussed in the Bible, she says. The book of Ezekiel, for example, includes a description of a vision of an arid, salty landscape where no vegetation grows. Copeland’s scholarship suggests these passages might be referencing the ancient Israelites’ actual experience with soil salinization caused by unsustainable agricultural practices.



Postdoctoral researcher Masumeh Kazemi (far left) and Michael Albro, an ENG assistant professor of mechanical engineering, use the Raman needle probe on an excised bovine cartilage specimen. Their arthroscope (below) shines light on a specimen, counts the tiny number of light particles that undergo a shift in wavelength, and uses that data to assess the specimen’s chemical composition.



NONINVASIVE DEVICE COULD SPEED OSTEOARTHRITIS DIAGNOSIS

► Knee and other joint cartilage health could be assessed with click of a button | BY PATRICK L. KENNEDY

IT’S A DISEASE that causes pain, can’t be cured, and can’t be diagnosed until it’s too late. Osteoarthritis afflicts 32.5 million Americans, making it the most common type of arthritis, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The degenerative joint disease occurs when articular cartilage—the tissue that cushions the ends of bones at the joint—wears away. The tissue loss is irreversible, so eventually an artificial joint is required. That’s a problem when the sufferer is a young adult or a teenager, because artificial joints last for only a couple of decades.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of adolescents and young adults suffer sports injuries that can lead to post-traumatic osteoarthritis, says orthopedics researcher Michael Albro, a College of Engineering assistant professor of mechanical engineering. “And they’re not yet eligible for a joint replacement procedure.”

Albro is leading a team of BU researchers—along with clinicians and other experts around the world—developing a weapon in the fight against osteoarthritis. Their non-invasive light-based arthroscope, which uses a technique called Raman spectroscopy, could be used to gauge the health of cartilage in the knees and other joints with the click of a button. The work recently received a \$3 million boost from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Soft tissue doesn’t show up very well in radiography scans; MRI—the gold standard for fractures and other diagnoses—doesn’t have quite the granular resolution needed for imaging cartilage. That means no method now in use can detect osteoarthritis early, when there might still be time to intervene.

The alternative that Albro and colleagues have crafted uses the principle of Raman scattering. Long used to date fossils and to bust art forgers, a

Raman spectroscope shines light on a specimen, counts the tiny number of light particles that undergo a shift in wavelength, and uses that data to assess the specimen’s chemical composition.

Applying this process to articular cartilage, Albro’s team figured out that Raman scattering would pick up on key biomarkers, measuring the tissue’s composition and mechanical function. With a grant from the Arthritis Foundation, they successfully tested their device—the first-ever Raman arthroscope—on donor cartilage in 2021. Now, with the NIH grant, they are testing it in live large animal models, bringing the technology another step closer to the clinic.

Why build a better arthroscope if cartilage loss can’t be reversed? Albro says many scientists are in fact working on methods that might stop osteoarthritis in its tracks—and some even hope to reverse it. If the disease could be detected early enough, that would prevent a lot of damage from occurring.

And many researchers are working on engineering or regenerating tissue to replace the cartilage. Indeed, Albro and some of his colleagues on the Raman arthroscope project are also involved in such efforts, as part of a two-pronged approach. Their arthroscope can take what they call an “optical biopsy,” which can assess the quality of the replacement tissue that they and others engineer, just as well as it can assess natural tissue.

DOES THE COVID VACCINE AFFECT MENSTRUATION?

► BU study found an average one-day shift in period cycle length, but no strong link between vaccination and cycle regularity, bleed length, or pain

BY ANDREW THURSTON AND JESSICA COLAROSSO

SOON AFTER COVID vaccines first started getting into arms, anecdotal reports began to suggest that they were changing people’s periods. Many said their cycles were arriving earlier and bringing heavier bleeding and greater pain after receiving the shot.

But a new School of Public Health–led study has found that the vaccines are likely not to blame for any major changes to the menstrual cycle; changes people did notice were likely the result of their body’s immune system responding to the shot. The findings were published in the medical journal *Vaccine*.

“We found that menstrual cycles immediately after vaccination were on average one day longer than pre-vaccination cycles,” says Amelia Wesselink (SPH’18), an SPH research assistant professor of epidemiology and lead author on the study. “In other words, the onset of the next menstrual period after vaccination was slightly delayed. We also found that cycle length returned to normal within a few cycles. Other

menstrual cycle characteristics, including cycle regularity, bleed length, bleed heaviness, and menstrual pain, were similar before and after vaccination.”

The researchers tracked 1,137 people between the ages of 21 and 45.

After comparing 437 participants who received at least one vaccine dose to 700 people who were unvaccinated, researchers found menstrual cycles increased by 1.1 days after a first dose and 1.3 days after a second. That shift resolved within one to two menstrual cycles. There were also no strong associations between vaccination and other changes. All participants were unvaccinated when they entered the study.

The researchers determined that the small alteration they saw in cycle length was probably due to the body’s immune response to the vaccine, and that “short-term changes in menstrual cycle characteristics likely do not translate into meaningful differences in fertility,” according to the paper.

JACOB WACKERHAUSEN/ISTOCK.COM

CHRIS MCINTOSH



NEW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM COULD HELP TREAT HYPERTENSION

► Model helps match people with high blood pressure to the medication that's most likely to work for them | BY MAUREEN STANTON

FOR THE NEARLY half of Americans with hypertension, the condition is a potential death sentence. Close to 700,000 deaths in 2021 were caused by high blood pressure, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It also increases the risk of stroke and chronic heart failure. While it's relatively easy to prevent or moderate if caught early—eat well, exercise more, drink less alcohol—it can be tough to treat. Although physicians have a bevy of potential hypertension medications to choose from, each has pros and cons, making prescribing the most effective one

a challenge: beta-blockers slow the heart, but can cause asthma; ACE inhibitors relax blood vessels, but can lead to a hacking cough.

A new artificial intelligence program may help doctors better match the right medicines to the right patients.

The data-driven model, codeveloped by BU data scientists and physicians, aims to give clinicians real-time hypertension treatment recommendations based on patient-specific characteristics, including demographics, vital signs, medical history, and clinical test records. The model has the potential to help reduce systolic blood

pressure—measured when the heart is beating rather than resting—more effectively than the current standard of care. According to the researchers, the program's approach to transparency could also help improve physicians' trust in artificial intelligence-generated results.

Currently, when choosing which medication to prescribe a patient, a doctor considers the patient's history, treatment goals, and the benefits and risks associated with specific medicines. Selecting which drug to prescribe when there are multiple options—and of the options, no drug is better or worse than any other—can be a bit of a coin toss.

The BU-developed model generates a custom hypertension prescription using

an individual patient's profile, giving physicians a list of suggested medications with an associated probability of success. The researchers' aim was to highlight the treatment that best controls systolic blood pressure for each patient based on its effectiveness in a group of similar patients.

The model was developed using deidentified data from 42,752 hypertensive patients of Boston Medical Center, BU's primary teaching hospital. Patients were sorted into affinity groups based on similarities of clinically relevant characteristics, such as demographics, past blood pressure records, and past medical history. During the study, the model's effectiveness was compared to the current standard of care, as well as three other algorithms designed to predict appropriate treatment plans. The researchers found it achieved a 70.3 percent larger reduction in systolic blood pressure than standard of care and performed 7.08 percent better than the second best model. The algorithm was clinically validated, with the researchers manually reviewing a random sample of 350 cases.

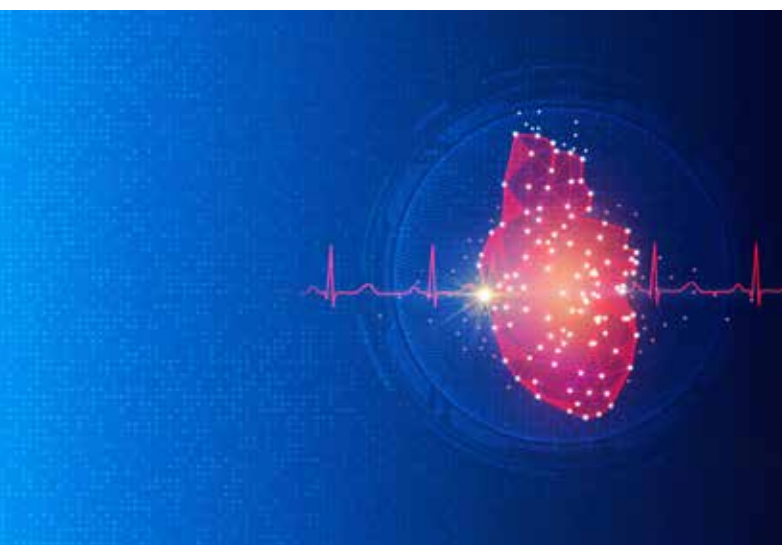
The model also showed the benefits of reducing or stopping prescriptions for some patients taking multiple medications. According to the research team, because the algorithm provides physicians with several suggested optimal therapies, it could give valuable insights when the medical community is divided on the effectiveness of one drug versus another. **B**



USING THE BU-DEVELOPED MODEL, THERE WAS A

70.3%

LARGER REDUCTION IN SYSTOLIC BLOOD PRESSURE THAN STANDARD OF CARE



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CREATIVES

WRITTEN | SEEN | HEARD

I still pinch myself... I'm still that little kid sitting on a couch going, 'What's that cool-looking shark doing now?' I'm fascinated by it."

GREG SKOMAL



TELLING HIS WHITE SHARK STORY

▶ Expert and alum Greg Skomal's new book is part science, part memoir
BY JOEL BROWN



Turbo the white shark checks out the camera off the coast of Cape Cod. The distinct scars and other physical features are used to identify and catalog individual sharks as they migrate to the Cape each year.

GREG SKOMAL

THE NAME Greg Skomal has become synonymous with white sharks in New England. Skomal (GRS'06) is senior fisheries biologist with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, directs the Massachusetts Shark Research Program, and works in partnership with the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy and its Sharktivity app. He pops up all over local TV whenever there's a shark incident on Cape Cod. Locals may know him best for the videos of him tagging sharks from the pulpit of a small research boat, including one in which a shark tried to strike back. Now Skomal's written a book, *Chasing Shadows: My Life Tracking the Great White Shark* (William Morrow, 2023), with science journalist Ret Talbot, that braids several storylines together, including research into the resurgence of white sharks on the Cape, the fatal attack on 26-year-old Arthur Medici off Wellfleet in 2018, and Skomal's longtime fascination with the animal. He's mindful that many beachgoers get up in arms over sharing the waters with such a predator. And, yes, there might be a *Jaws* reference or two.

CYDNEY SCOTT

Skomal has been drawn to white sharks—their speed and power and overall wow factor—since he was a boy watching undersea explorer Jacques Cousteau's TV specials in the late 1960s and the 1970s. We asked him about his career studying this awesome predator and that time one of them tried to eat him. **BOSTONIA: You talk about a balance between nature and public safety. Things seem quiet on the Cape, but there are plenty of sharks around, right?** **GREG SKOMAL:** That balance can be referred to as perhaps coexistence, with a predatory shark overlapping with human activities. Maybe this is simply because we haven't had a negative event since 2018, and so everybody seems to be getting along. The players are basically human beings recreating in nearshore areas and sharks feeding in nearshore areas. Some people have accepted levels of risk; these tend to be surfers and boogie boarders, and we still see them out every day that we go out on the water. They tend to be a little bit farther from shore.

Others have adapted their behavior: I see a lot of swimmers stay fairly close to the beach, particularly along the outer Cape. Many people don't go in over their waist. But the beaches remain crowded. That means we're in a good place. But I'll also caution that if we do get a bite, all that's going to change, and from some folks we're going to see pitchforks and torches again. **This year, there have been several attacks on Long Island, and they're deploying a lot of drones and other sorts of technological methods of keeping people safe. Reporters ask why aren't we doing more of that kind of stuff up here?** The towns are forever evaluating options. They try to work in concert, but each one takes a different approach to some extent. Wellfleet is, in my opinion, the single town that wants to embrace some of the newer technologies. They really like our real-time reporting receivers, for example, which will tell those lifeguards when there is a tagged white shark in their swimming area. I also know that they deployed at least one drone this summer.

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Other towns, Orleans for example, basically operate like there are always sharks in the swimming area. And those are the guarded swimming areas. Their premise going into beach safety is, there could always be a shark swimming in this area, so we have to act accordingly. Other towns are pretty much hands-off. And, keep in mind, many of these beaches are managed by the National Park Service, and they're completely hands-off, swim at your own risk.

I think the fear that some towns have—and I don't know whether they've consulted with their legal counsel—is the liability associated with giving a false sense of security. There's also concern that if you start doing some sort of new technique, you're going to have to stick with it even if it's proven not to be very effective. And so one of the things that I'm doing with the conservancy is trying to evaluate, for example, the efficacy of drone use. Will it work, and under what conditions will it not work? Other technologies are pretty much off the table. We haven't seen much movement at all on, for example, underwater sonar systems. I think that's for the most part cost-prohibitive and untested.

How has climate change affected this whole situation?

We believe that right now climate change isn't doing much with regard to shark movements, or seals at this stage, even though perhaps it could be a factor. It'll be interesting to see how climate change influences the sharks in the coming years, and we'll be able to do that because we have so many tagged.

But, in essence, the general understanding among the seal biologists is that, historically, seals have always been present on Cape Cod, but we drove them to the brink of extinction over a hundred years ago. And so most people today do not remember there being many seals, and they'll say it's a new phenomenon. But what we've done is given half a century of [marine mammal] protection to these animals,

Skomal briefs state officials on the phone while the white shark Gretel swims in the shallows of a Cape Cod estuary in 2004, an episode recounted in *Chasing Shadows*.



and they have responded and come back and repopulated areas where they previously existed. And as a result, white sharks are drawn to them as a food source.

Climate change may influence the timing of sharks in terms of their arrival, their residency, and their departure. Historically, we know they have gone all the way up to Newfoundland in the past and they continue to do that. So, we don't see a range extension north. But we may see some shifts in timing of migration.

In the book, you talk about being a kid in 1968 watching Jacques Cousteau on TV. If you told that little boy where you'd be today, what would he think?

He probably would not believe it. He was pretty fascinated back then. Cousteau did bring new imagery into our living rooms. How far we've come over these last 50 years is absolutely amazing to me. But I still pinch myself. People say to me, "You seem so excited when you're doing your job," and they wonder whether I'm acting. And I say, "No, no, I'm still that little kid sitting on a couch going, 'What's that cool-looking shark doing right now?'" I'm fascinated by it, and I always tell my wife that one of these days



The book weaves together several storylines, including research into the resurgence of the apex predator on Cape Cod.

I'm gonna overreact and have a heart attack on the pulpit because I'm not young anymore.

It's funny you use the phrase "heart attack on the pulpit." You mention dreams a couple of times in the book, and you also talk about that most famous Greg Skomal video moment, when a shark jumped at you from under the pulpit, which would have given a lot of people a heart attack. Does that feature in your dreams now?

[Laughs.] It's funny, it happened so fast at the time, really a split second, that I was in shock to some extent. But watching the video over and over and over again is what kind of started me thinking—and certainly got my wife thinking. The kids were fascinated by it. But I keep assuring people, I was really pretty safe. What I think about is not the shark maybe coming straight up at the pulpit, because I'm protected there. I really am. But what about a breaching shark that comes over the side of the pulpit and lands on me? These are 1,000-, 2,000-, 3,000-pound animals; they have incredible power and momentum.

So, sometimes when I'm out on the end of the pulpit, if I'm not seeing a shark that's supposed to be there, you'll see me casually walk off the pulpit. If I don't know where this shark is, how do I know what it's going to do? They are unpredictable. But the dreams I have—actually, I had one last night, another white shark dream, with me in the water and the presence of the shark and the overwhelming feeling that I'm not safe. And I wake up sometimes in cold sweats.

ED LYMAN/MDMF



DAN PEREZ

SAVORING THE COOKING EXPERIENCE

► Alum Adeena Sussman encourages readers to slow down in her new cookbook, *Shabbat: Recipes and Rituals from My Table to Yours* | BY MARA SASSOON

SHABBAT, the weekly Jewish day of rest, and its meals have long been a central part of Adeena Sussman's Jewish and culinary identities. In her latest cookbook, *Shabbat: Recipes and Rituals from My Table to Yours* (Avery, 2023), she ruminates on her relationship with the Jewish Sabbath at different phases of her life and presents 130 recipes inspired by the foods she has eaten

over time, such as White Shakshuka with Roasted Crispy Eggplant, Moroccan Carrot Salad, and Chicken Thighs with Roasted Figs & Grapes.

In the book, Sussman (COM'93) recalls the Shabbat dinners of her childhood, with her mother starting preparations on Wednesdays. (Shabbat runs from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday.) "I grew up enveloped in

■ Adeena Sussman's recipe for Fig & Pomegranate Brisket is at bu.edu/bostonia.

"I grew up enveloped in Shabbat's magic, aware of how my family's life revolved around this sacred bubble," Adeena Sussman writes in her new cookbook.



Shabbat's magic, aware of how my family's life revolved around this sacred bubble," she writes. "In my childhood home in Palo Alto, California, our weekdays were a mere prelude to Shabbat."

Her relationship with the holiday has evolved over the years. At BU, when she didn't cook much, she attended Shabbat dinners and lunches at Hillel. After college, she spent time in Jerusalem and learned to make Shabbat meals with friends. When she moved to New York City for a job and gradually stopped observing Shabbat, she felt "unmoored, empty, and exhausted" and longed for the opportunity it provided to relax and recharge, she writes in the cookbook.

Sussman, who moved to Israel almost a decade ago, explored its cuisine

in her previous cookbook, *Sababa* (Avery, 2019), which was named to the *New York Times* "13 Best Cookbooks of Fall 2019" list. After *Sababa*, "I was looking for another organizing principle that would allow me to continue to explore the intersection of my new citizenship in Israel and my Jewish culture," she says from her home in Tel Aviv. She landed on Shabbat because of its ubiquity in Israeli life—but she notes that her experience with the holiday has been different in Israel than in the United States.

"I feel like my Shabbat experience in the US is maybe a little more traditional," she says. "Many people there identify Shabbat with chicken soup and matzah balls and chopped liver—all those traditional foods. In Israel, it's much wider than that. It's like a national holiday every week that centers around food."

Sussman hopes her recipes will inspire readers to slow down and savor their weekends.

"In Israel, people are very religious about observing Shabbat, but not necessarily in a religious way," she says. "It's a time for people to get together, cook, and entertain in a more relaxed fashion. I encourage people to take time while they're cooking, to slow down, unplug, and enjoy communing with the kitchen, the ingredients, and the processes, as opposed to just putting out food to entertain guests. I want the cooking experience to be relaxing, and even potentially restorative, for the cook."

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CARTOONIST EXPLORES STORIES OF VETERANS OF THE BATTLEFIELD—AND THE COVID ICU

► Alum Jess Ruliffson's first book was an Eisner Award nominee | BY JOEL BROWN



JESS RULIFFSON

JESS RULIFFSON'S first nonfiction graphic novel focused on a dozen veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, now back home and dealing with what combat had done to them, inside and out. The book, *Invisible Wounds* (Fantagraphics Books, 2022), was nominated for a prestigious Will Eisner Comic Industry Award in 2023. *Publishers Weekly* praised its "sensitivity and unflinching honesty."

Now, Ruliffson (GRS'22) and her husband, Ernesto Barbieri, a writer and registered nurse, are collaborating on a new project with the working title *Saint in the City*, about his experiences as a hospital intensive care nurse, during the COVID pandemic and beyond.

In the new work, the words are her husband's and those of his coworkers and patients and their families, with names and appearances changed to protect their identities. Barbieri was grappling with a memoir, and Ruliffson, who teaches the College of Arts & Sciences course The Graphic Novel, didn't know what project she wanted to tackle next. They had "a lightbulb moment," she says. "Luckily we collaborate pretty well, and I'm biased, but I think his writing is really wonderful."

This year, *Saint in the City* has been excerpted in the *Boston Globe*, under the title *Tenderness and Brutality*, and in the *Nib*, then publisher of political cartoons and nonfiction comics.

For *Invisible Wounds*, she interviewed veterans who talked about race and identity at home, as well as on the battlefield.

"Listening is—it's going to sound corny—but I feel like it's how we save each other," says Ruliffson, who has a BFA in illustration from the School of Visual Arts in New York and a master's degree in creative writing from BU.

The two projects explore conflicts between duty and humanity, the unpredictable fallout from life-or-death decisions, and the effects on those who do the deciding and may suffer what she calls "moral injury."

Both in the ICU and on the battlefield, there can be "a gap between what you're asked to do and what that really looks like," she says.

"There's this idea, particularly during the pandemic, that there's this big thing that I don't have any power to stop, where I can't help the people I love who are suffering. Or maybe you don't even know the people very well, but you're confronted by their suffering. What do you do with it?"

Panel 1 (Top Left): When Chloe appears in the doorway, she's draped in protective gear. What are you doing? What's it look like? She's COVID-positive.

Panel 2 (Top Middle-Left): I remember when this was a novelty, a ritual I actually had to think about. The odor of the N-95 mask, the fibrous yellow gowns, the clouded goggles, the heat and claustrophobia. Those months hold a sort of dismal nostalgia. All those strangers saying "Thank you," a banner outside the hospital reading: "YOU WERE ALWAYS ESSENTIAL!" as if the pandemic had clarified something about us.

Panel 3 (Top Middle-Right): 11:10 AM. We get the woman connected to the monitor. Then I look at the woman. The woman, not the screen. She's agitated and air-hungry, pulling at the mask. Her fingernails are painted with glitter but the skin around them is a dusky, bureaucratic gray. She needs to be intubated.

Panel 4 (Top Right): Intubation: A tube is forced down the patient's throat, which allows them to breathe but costs them their voice. Another tube is routed to the stomach, providing calories without satiation. And through the jugular: sedation without rest. No one mentions the isolation, the frustration of trying to communicate with hand gestures and pictograms, the cloth restraints we use to tie the patient's hands down if they reach too often for the tube, stripping them even of gestures.

Panel 5 (Second Row, Middle-Left): Chloe cracks the door and shouts out her needs: a Foley catheter kit, a pressure bag and transducer, various narcotics and crystalloid fluids.

Panel 6 (Second Row, Middle-Right): For the next six hours, she doesn't leave the room. A choice must be made.

Panel 7 (Second Row, Right): 3:40 PM. Do we intubate the 82-year-old woman, and pray that somehow, in the course of a week or so, her immune system will rally and we can take out the breathing tube? Or do we marshal the powers of science into a kind of honorable surrender and make her death as comfortable as possible?

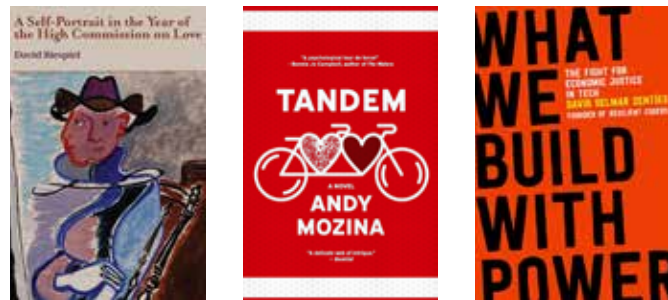
Panel 8 (Third Row, Middle-Left): We're in the waiting room, talking with the woman's son. She will get better, yes? We don't know yet. We have to see how her body responds.

Panel 9 (Third Row, Middle-Right): Doctor Asher is a terse, analytical person with a good heart who does not dabble in predictions. She's breathing now. Yes? The machine is breathing for her.

Panel 10 (Third Row, Right): I wonder about these doctors, what inspires them, what they yearn for, how they reconcile what they know with what they see. I sometimes think the practice of critical care medicine is just that—practice. A way of asserting science's primacy. Maybe abstract medical reasoning—like compassion or religious faith—is a muscle that's easily fatigued. You just keep flexing it, until one day you try to lift that weight and find there's nothing left.

JACKIE RICCIARDI

An excerpt from *Saint in the City* by Jess Ruliffson (GRS'22) and Ernesto Barbieri, courtesy of the creators. >>



READING LIST

► Alumni books that caught our eye | BY BOSTONIA STAFF

BACKSTAGE & BEYOND: 45 YEARS OF CLASSIC ROCK CHATS & RANTS

Trouser Press Books, 2023
By Jim Sullivan (COM'80)
The longtime *Boston Globe* music writer taps his deep archive to create portraits of the rock stars of the 1950s to 1970s he encountered over the years, from Jerry Lee Lewis to David Bowie. Volume 1 came out this summer; volume 2, covering later acts, came out this fall.

DUCKTAILS, DRIVE-INS, AND BROKEN HEARTS

SUNY Press/Excelsior Editions, 2023
By Hank Davis (GRS'65)
Subtitled *An Unsweetened Look at '50s Music*, this volume by veteran music journalist Davis looks at little-known sides of stars like Elvis Presley and Charlie Rich and less famous characters like Rockin' Eddy Bell and the Paragons.

THE GHOSTS OF OTHER IMMIGRANTS

New American Press, 2023
By Maija Mäkinen (GRS'17)
Stories about migrants of one sort or another, from Scandinavia to New York and Washington, D.C., facing threats like climate change and pasts they can't leave behind.

THE GREATEST SUMMER IN BASEBALL HISTORY: HOW THE '73 SEASON CHANGED US FOREVER

Sourcebooks, 2023
By John Rosengren (GRS'94)
A look at the year Hank Aaron challenged the Babe's home run record, George Steinbrenner bought the Yankees, the American League introduced the designated hitter, and Reggie Jackson became World Series MVP.

HATCHET GIRLS

Delacorte Press, 2023 | By Diana Rodriguez Wallach (COM'00)
A young adult horror novel set in Fall River, Mass., where a teenager commits a double axe murder that seems Lizzie Borden-adjacent. But the terror in the woods has been around for centuries...

HOUSE OF CARAVANS

Milkweed Editions, 2023
By Shilpi Suneja (GRS'09)
A debut novel, set in the 1940s and in 2002, explores the long shadow of the Partition of India through the trials of one family. Ha Jin (GRS'94), a BU College of Arts & Sciences professor of English and of creative writing, called it "a marvel of a novel."

IN OTHER WORDS, LEADERSHIP

Steerforth Press, 2023
By Shannon A. Mullen (COM'04)
The true story of a young mother's letters to Maine Governor Janet Mills during the pandemic, and how the correspondence helped the two survive the challenges of 2020.

THE PHOENIX CROWN

William Morrow Paperbacks, 2024
By Kate Quinn (CFA'04,'06)
Written with Janie Chang, the story of two very different women in 1906 San Francisco who come together over the titular Chinese relic and then are torn apart by the earthquake.

RED CHAOS

Beaufort Books, 2023
By Ed Fuller (Questrom'68)
In the third installment of the Red Hotel series of international thrillers, written with Gary Grossman, the heroic CIA consultant and hotel executive Dan Reilly must stop the sinister Russian plot behind a series of terrorist attacks.

ROMAN STORIES

Knopf, 2023 | By Jhumpa Lahiri (GRS'93, UNI'95,'97)
Her first collection of short fiction since 2008 was written in Italian and then translated by Lahiri and her editor. Her 1999 collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, won the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction.

A SELF-PORTRAIT IN THE YEAR OF THE HIGH COMMISSION ON LOVE

Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2023 | By David Biespiel (CAS'86)
The 13th book and first novel by the poet, critic, and memoirist follows two teenagers from Houston on a Gulf Coast binge that may change their lives and that of a young woman they meet along the way.

TANDEM

Tortoise Books, 2023
By Andy Mozina (GRS'90)
A depressed economics professor kills two bicyclists while driving drunk and gets away with it. Then he meets one victim's mother and they feel a real connection. Things get complicated.

WHAT WE BUILD WITH POWER: THE FIGHT FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN TECH

Beacon Press, 2023
By David Delmar Senties (CFA'06)
A manifesto for change in the tech industry from the founder and former executive director of the Cambridge-based nonprofit Resilient Coders, which trains people of color from low-income backgrounds for careers as software engineers.

ALUM'S TRUE-CRIME BOOK NOW A CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED HBO SERIES

► *Last Call* is not just an account of a serial killer who targeted gay men in Manhattan. It's a story of queer resilience. | BY SOPHIE YARIN

*I'll be seeing you
In all the old familiar places
That this heart of mine
embraces
All day through...*

EVERYONE AT the Five Oaks bar knew Michael Sakara's favorite song. The 56-year-old frequented the Manhattan piano bar in its heyday in the early nineties. An out gay man during the height of the AIDS crisis, Sakara and fellow patrons—most of whom were closeted—felt that queer-friendly bars like the Oaks were a haven of understanding and kinship in a dangerous time. Sakara was cherished there, by staff and customers alike. Each night, it was customary for him to join the pianist for one final song before closing.

One night, Sakara left with a man no one at the Oaks recognized—and he was never seen alive again. He wasn't the only one.

Almost 30 years later, writer Elon Green (CGS'99,

COM'01)—a veteran of the *New Yorker*, *Atlantic*, and *Columbia Journalism Review*—discovered the story of the “last call murders,” so named because of the killer's propensity to target queer bars right before closing. Green was flipping through a mid-1990s issue of *The Advocate*, one of the earliest mainstream LGBTQ+ publications in the US, where he discovered brief sketches of the victims mentioned in a feature on rampant anti-gay violence.

“I looked it up to see if it was ever solved and realized there wasn't so much as a Wikipedia entry,” Green recalls. “I was so taken by the lives of the men that I started researching and interviewing, and over the course of a year came up with a book proposal.”

In 2021, Green's work culminated in *Last Call: A True Story of Love, Lust, and Murder in Queer New York* (Celadon). The Edgar Award-winning true-crime

book foregrounds the victims—Sakara, Thomas Mulcahy, Peter Stickney Anderson, and Anthony Marrero—and the people who loved them.

“I didn't know, when *Last Call* was published, if it was going to resonate,” says Green. “When the book was sold, the market was not clamoring for queer true crime, and it was especially not clamoring for a victim-centric approach.”

The book did resonate, and its acclaim is paralleled by the success of HBO's adaptation, *Last Call: When a Serial Killer Stalked Queer New York*, a four-part docuseries released in July 2023. It netted 100 percent on Rotten Tomatoes and won high praise from *Rolling Stone*, the *New Yorker*, *Vulture*, the *Guardian*, and *Entertainment Weekly*.

Green says he appreciated the series' commitment to

portraying LGBTQ+ activism during the AIDS era. Former LGBTQ+ community leaders and members of the New York City Anti-Violence Project, a queer crisis intervention organization, feature prominently in the docuseries, as does a sweeping history of anti-gay violence in the city.

The Last Call Killer was identified in 2001 as 43-year-old Richard Rogers; he was convicted of two of the murders in 2005 and is serving two consecutive life sentences in New Jersey State Prison. Rogers moved anonymously from gay bar to gay bar in the early 1990s, when queer-bashing in New York was at a high and bolstered by AIDS panic, anti-gay legislative policies, and a prejudiced metropolitan police force.

But *Last Call* is not a story of anti-gay hatred any more than it is a story of a serial killer. Part of Green's commitment to keeping a steady lens on the victims meant portraying them in one of the most vibrant queer scenes on the planet, a city of infinite joy and infinite danger.

“It was an incredible period in the history of New York City nightlife,” Green says, “and one of the reasons why there hadn't been much written about it before is that, to the degree that the bars and clubs were mentioned, it was always through the prism of AIDS. People could lose sight of the fact that people had a great time there.... They were a refuge. I wanted the reader to understand that.” **B**



ELON GREEN says he didn't know if his book would resonate when it was published, in 2021.



MATILDE SPARACCO

Beyond her background in science and medicine, Gilliam says she was raised to embrace the societal importance of arts and culture.



BOSTON UNIVERSITY NAMES MELISSA L. GILLIAM 11TH PRESIDENT

MELISSA L. GILLIAM, the executive vice president and provost of The Ohio State University, and a distinguished educator, scholar, research scientist, and physician, will be Boston University's 11th president, BU trustees announced on October 4. She will assume the post on July 1, 2024.

A national leader in faculty recruitment and student success and a champion of diversity and inclusion, Gilliam is also a professor of obstetrics and gynecology and pediatrics whose scholarship focuses on developing interventions to promote adolescent health and well-being.

Gilliam will come to Boston from a sprawling midwestern university, one of the largest public institutions in the country, with 15 colleges, more than 7,500 faculty members, and over 60,000 students across 6 campuses.

"I'm really excited about how engaged Boston University is in the city and how engagement has been a hallmark of BU," Gilliam says. "I'm looking forward to hearing from people, learning and listening. I lead by listening, collaborating, and empowering other people. That is the best way to run big organizations, to get everyone excited and engaged and empowered and doing more than they think they're capable of doing. This philosophy is core to shared governance, an essential component of a thriving university."

Boston, and Boston University, will be familiar territory for Gilliam. She graduated from Harvard Medical School, and for one of her summer projects there, she collaborated with BU School of Public Health researchers,

joining them in Ecuador on a project aimed at understanding the health of elderly people.

"From the very beginning, I was able to form that connection to Boston University," she says, "and I always knew it as a place that was going places that other institutions weren't."

Now, more than two decades later, Gilliam, who is 58, returns. She succeeds Robert A. Brown, who served as BU's 10th president from 2005 until stepping down over the summer. Kenneth Freeman, BU president ad interim since Brown's departure, will remain in the post until Gilliam begins in July and will help her transition into the role during the spring.

Her appointment caps a search that lasted more than a year and yielded close to 400 potential candidates from around the world. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni participated in the process by sharing the characteristics and qualifications they hoped to see in their next president, input that helped shape a presidential profile and guided the work of the 16-person search committee.

Beyond her background in science and medicine, Gilliam says she was raised to embrace the societal importance of arts and culture. Her late father, Sam Gilliam, was a pioneering abstract painter who was known for a career of continuous experimentation and innovation. Her mother, Dorothy Gilliam, was a trailblazing journalist and the first Black female reporter hired by the *Washington Post*. Her parents instilled in her an intellectual curiosity and a firm belief in the importance of civic engagement and public service.

Gilliam studied English literature at Yale and philosophy and politics at the University of Oxford, and has an MD from Harvard and an MPH from the University of Illinois Chicago. As a resident in obstetrics and gynecology at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago, she began to look at why so many teenagers became pregnant again within just one year of delivery.

"There's a lot of shame and blame in the way that people talk about teen pregnancy, which in so many ways is unwarranted," she says. "We have to open the aperture and think about larger societal challenges associated with teen pregnancy."

She led a number of biomedical studies, driven by a desire to gain a firmer grasp on the systems that lead to initial and then repeat adolescent pregnancy. Gilliam's work helped elevate her to chief of family planning and contraceptive research at the University of Chicago, while also leading the university's Program in Gynecology for Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults.

But she continued to seek greater impact. "We weren't understanding the lives of young people," she says. "We were writing prescriptions, we were not listening, we were not walking in their shoes." In 2012, she founded the Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation in Sexual and Reproductive Health at the University of Chicago,

“**I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING FROM PEOPLE, LEARNING AND LISTENING. I LEAD BY LISTENING, COLLABORATING, AND EMPOWERING OTHER PEOPLE.**”

MELISSA L. GILLIAM

an interdisciplinary research center using games, narrative, and design to promote the health and well-being of young people.

Gilliam, who was the Ellen H. Block Distinguished Service Professor of Health Justice at the University of Chicago, spent the majority of her career there. As vice provost, she developed and led the university's faculty development and hiring programs, while creating new diversity and inclusion efforts, fellowship programs, and workshops. She left the university in 2021 after five years as vice provost.

In her role at Ohio State, she has served as the chief academic officer and chief operating officer. She oversees the Office of Academic Affairs, including undergraduate education, graduate education, international affairs, diversity and inclusion, external engagement, online learning, and information technology. She developed the Academic Plan, providing an overarching strategy for academic excellence.

Ahmass Fakahany (Questrom'79), chair of the BU Board of Trustees, says



Melissa L. Gilliam's appointment as the next Boston University president was announced as the magazine was going to press. Read the complete coverage, and watch a video interview with Gilliam, at bu.edu/bostonia.

the key strengths in Gilliam's background that resonated with the search committee were her deep experience in a private university, with more than 16 years at the University of Chicago, as well as her time in a public university the size of Ohio State, and how she applied her leadership and interdisciplinary skills in both settings. Like BU, her two prior institutions

are members of the Association of American Universities, a consortium of 71 leading public and private universities that perform more than half of the nation's federally funded basic research and award nearly half of the research doctoral degrees in the country. Ohio State is the 12th largest research university in the country (BU ranks 43rd), with nearly \$1.4 billion in research expenditures, approximately double BU's amount.

In a world that needs more collaboration and more partnerships, Fakahany says he was struck by Gilliam's ability to build bridges. Her instinct toward collaborating shined through the more he got to know her.

"Her listening ear is very genuine," he says. "She is sharp and decisive. But we live in a world where you can't figure it out all by yourself. It will be critical that we work in teams with an open mind, sharing ideas and nurturing talent, and Dr. Gilliam will be the driving force to bring everyone together to identify the opportunities that will propel BU forward." ■



BY JILLIAN MCKOY

RACISM, SEXISM, AND THE CRISIS OF BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH

BU leads the largest and longest-running study of Black women's health, shining a light on tragic disparities and showing women their lives matter

KATE_SEPT2004/ISTOCK.COM

Charlene Coyne often thinks back to how her mother, Donna, struggled with severe hypertension for most of her life, battling complications that led to a heart attack and stroke by the time Donna was in her thirties.

She also recalls the dismissive response from a doctor when her mother voiced concerns about the severe side effects—blurry vision, severe headaches, dizziness, nausea, fatigue—of her blood pressure medications.

“I noticed a physical transformation and could see how toxic the drugs were for her,” says Coyne, now a New York-based biopharmaceutical executive. When Donna mentioned her symptoms to her doctor, he refused to change her treatment plan. “He insisted that he knew what he was doing, and that she just needed to give the medication time to work. But she had already done that.”

At age 43, Coyne’s mother passed away from hypertension complications. “She suffered unnecessarily,” Coyne says, “and it breaks my heart to this day.”

Her family’s health history—her father would later suffer a fatal heart attack—and inadequate healthcare experiences are in part what motivated Coyne to join Boston University’s Black Women’s Health Study (BWHS) 28 years ago and become part of a group of 59,000 women in the largest and longest-running study in the United States focused entirely on the health of Black women.

Founded in 1995 at BU’s Slone Epidemiology Center, BWHS aims to understand the underlying causes of poor health—and good health—among Black women, and, with this



Charlene Coyne became a participant in the Black Women’s Health Study 28 years ago, motivated in part by her family’s health history and inadequate healthcare experiences.

knowledge, raise awareness and spur action to reduce the long-standing racial disparities and inequities in health. Black women are more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to die from cardiovascular disease, hypertension, stroke, lupus, and several cancers. They are twice as likely than white women to develop diabetes over age 55 or have uncontrolled blood pressure. Black women also face greater challenges in accessing affordable and quality healthcare, including a lack of health insurance, higher medical debt, and longer travel times to hospitals.

In the past 25-plus years, BWHS has published more than 350 papers, often in collaboration with external researchers from other cohort studies, such as the BU-based Framingham Heart Study, the longest-running heart

disease study in the US. The heaviest emphasis has been on breast cancer, but the findings span diabetes, obesity, autoimmune diseases, insomnia, and other conditions.

Many of these papers mark the first time these relationships were evaluated among a scientifically meaningful—in other words, large—population of Black women. These studies, often published in prestigious journals, not only fill a significant void in research, but also serve as long-sought acknowledgment that these stark racial disparities exist—and that Black women and their health matter.

“I’m really proud to be part of a study that has prioritized the health of Black women,” says Julie Palmer (SON’80, SPH’85), a BU Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine

professor of medicine and director of the Slone Epidemiology Center. Palmer cofounded BWHS, and is one of three lead investigators. “There are behavior changes that individuals can make to improve their health, but to dismantle racial disparities in health, we also need institutional change.”

Tracking Health Trajectories

Despite their disproportionate health burdens, Black women historically have largely been excluded from clinical research, which has focused primarily on white males.

“Women were just starting to be included in studies when I became an epidemiologist, and Black women weren’t included at all,” says Lynn Rosenberg (GRS’65), a School of Public Health professor of epidemiology who cofounded BWHS. She previously co-led the study and remains part of the core research team. “We knew there was a dire need for this research.”

She and her team—which also included Lucile Adams-Campbell, then-director of Howard University Cancer Center and now at Georgetown University’s Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center—secured the massive cohort by inviting subscribers of *Essence* magazine to participate. The National Institutes of Health has renewed funding every five years.

The study launched with participants ages 21–69, on average 38, from

all regions of the US. Most are highly educated; only 3 percent of the women have not completed high school. More than half of the women have provided saliva, blood, or cancer tissue samples for genetic research.

Every few years, the participants complete confidential questionnaires about their demographics, health conditions, and lifestyle, as well as the impact of consequential moments in society, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The team publishes newsletters and holds educational webinars and community events to share findings, engage with participants, and gather feedback on health topics that interest the women. They hope their findings help patients make informed choices about their health, and arm healthcare providers and policymakers with the necessary data and insight to combat long-standing racial inequities in health.

By examining the same group of women over decades, researchers can comprehensively track the health trajectories of thousands of women as they grow older.

“When I first heard about the Black Women’s Health Study, I said, ‘Thank goodness—someone finally cares,’” says Kim Bressant Kibwe, a Jersey City, N.J.–based participant and retired attorney. “We’re not all the same. There are many experiences that differ from one culture to the next.”

At 69 years old, Kibwe still wonders if the major surgery she received to remove uterine fibroids as a college student was medically necessary. Black women are two to three times more likely than white women to develop fibroids, according to BWHS research, and 14 percent of participants reported they developed fibroids within the study’s first decade.

Kibwe says she never questioned her doctor’s recommendation to remove one ovary and both fallopian tubes, nor his warning that she may become unable to have children.

That possibility turned into reality. “After the third time I tried to have children, at age 29 or 30, I said it just wasn’t meant to be,” she says. “But I wonder if something less drastic could have been done to address my medical issues and preserve my health.”

The Role of Racism

The overarching question for the researchers is: Why? Why are Black women less likely than white women to get breast cancer, but 40 percent more likely to die if they do develop it? Why are they more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes and high blood pressure? And what role does racism play in Black women’s health?

Some of the study results align with broadly accepted knowledge: obesity increases the risk of type 2 diabetes; exercise improves physical and mental health.

“Some findings may seem like commonsense conclusions, but policymakers need actual evidence to make decisions and inform policies that will improve the health of their constituents,” says Patricia Coogan (SPH’87,96), a BWHS investigator and an SPH research professor of epidemiology. She joined the team in 1996.

One observation is becoming increasingly clear: racism and other stressors may be much stronger predictors of poor health than individual choices or genetic differences.

The psychological trauma of racial discrimination may increase cortisol (the body’s stress hormone) and weaken the immune system, potentially leading to elevated blood pressure, memory problems, and other conditions.

The 1997, 2009, and 2019 questionnaires asked participants about their



“When I first heard about the Black Women’s Health Study, I said, ‘Thank goodness—someone finally cares,’” says participant Kim Bressant Kibwe, who lives in Jersey City, N.J.

CHRIS SORESENSEN

CHRIS SORESENSEN

past experiences with interpersonal racism, including daily, one-off encounters of perceived slights—such as poor service in a store or restaurant—as well as discriminatory treatment at work or in school, healthcare, the court system, housing, and interactions with police.

The researchers are also measuring the impact of structural racism, a relatively new term in public discourse that refers to the ways in which societies foster discrimination in policies or practices—perhaps less overt than “daily” racism, but still a reflection of the historically racist systems that remain embedded within society.

“Structural racism affects where people live, how they can exercise, the foods they eat, and the resources available to them,” says Palmer, who is also an SPH professor of epidemiology. “We didn’t have a name for it 20 years ago, but we have always acknowledged its influence on health, and we are continuing to examine how these racial experiences uniquely affect Black women.”

Experiences of racial discrimination may lead to increased weight gain, for example, as detailed in a 2009 study by Yvette Cozier (SPH’94,04), SPH’s associate dean for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice and an associate professor of epidemiology. About 60 percent of Black women experience obesity compared to 40 percent of white women. Cozier says her findings underscore the role of racism in the US obesity epidemic and the need for continued antidiscrimination efforts across the country. The researchers have also linked racism to increased risks of diabetes, hypertension, accelerated aging, asthma, and most recently, heart disease.

Social Structures Determining Health

A close look at racial disparities reveals another major predictor of poor health among Black women: zip code.

Historically racist policies, such as slavery and redlining, have led to decades of neighborhood disinvestment in Black communities, which translates to fewer parks, fewer supermarkets with fresh and affordable foods, and higher levels of crime and air pollution. Regardless of their income or education level, Black women are still more likely

BLACK WOMEN ARE LESS LIKELY THAN WHITE WOMEN TO GET BREAST CANCER, BUT 40 PERCENT MORE LIKELY TO DIE IF THEY DO DEVELOP IT.

to live in disadvantaged neighborhoods compared to white women.

“We’ve come to realize how much one’s neighborhood environment and social structures, rather than genes, prescribe health outcomes,” says Cozier, an early BWHS investigator who now coleads the study. She studies how psychosocial stressors—from divorce and job pressure to assault and natural disasters—influence the development of autoimmune and immune-mediated diseases, such as the difficult-to-diagnose sarcoidosis, which can affect the lungs, skin, kidneys, muscles, nervous system, and other organs.

“We all have the same genes, but those genes are expressed differently across different groups of people, particularly in hyperstressful or low-resource environments,” Cozier says.

Participant Simona L. Brickers, who lives in Trenton, N.J., observes this disparity in housing time and time again as an organizational leadership and development consultant who has guided government and nonprofit organizations in developing antiracist community initiatives.

“When I travel to other states, I can tell automatically which areas are deemed less desirable, and they are the Black communities,” Brickers says. Participating in BWHS has made her “more aware, more vigilant, and more proactive” about her health.

Black women who live in low-socioeconomic status neighborhoods are more likely to develop a number of conditions, including an aggressive subtype of breast cancer called estrogen receptor-negative (ER-), which has been the focus of some of BWHS’ most prominent research.

In 2014, Palmer led a landmark study that revealed Black women who have more than one child, but who

never breastfed, were more likely to develop ER- breast cancer, and this risk increased with each additional birth.

The findings debunk the common belief that only women who do not have children are at increased risk of developing breast cancer. This risk is only true for ER+ (estrogen receptor-positive) diagnoses, which are seen at higher rates in white women compared to Black women.

Kimberly Bertrand (SPH’05), a BWHS leader and a Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine associate professor of medicine, led a subsequent study that reinforced these results and showed a similar increase in risk for women who had their first child at older ages and had greater abdominal fat.

“We still don’t know why having babies without breastfeeding may cause this increased risk of breast cancer, but we can rule out genetics as the main cause,” Palmer says. “It is likely a combination of stressors that raise inflammation in the body, as well as some biological differences.”

And not everyone has the same opportunities to breastfeed, Bertrand notes. From lack of maternity leave to insufficient time or space to pump breast milk at work, she says, “it’s not always an individual choice of whether a woman can breastfeed.”

Breast Cancer Risk Prediction

When breast cancer is identified quickly, treatment can be very effective. So, knowing an individual’s risk can inform appropriate screening plans. But traditional breast cancer risk prediction tools were only designed based on data from white women.

That changed in 2021, when Palmer led another pivotal study that developed and evaluated a breast cancer risk prediction model specifically geared toward Black women.

“So many young Black women are dying of breast cancer in their thirties and forties, in part because they didn’t know about it until it was too late for the treatments to be successful,” Palmer says.

The newer tool, designed as a questionnaire, is more effective than previous models, and it works best for women under 40. Clinicians and individuals can input information about a woman’s personal and family medical and reproductive history to calculate



The studies published by BWHS fill a significant void in research. The lead investigators are Kimberly Bertrand (far left), Julie Palmer (second from left), and Yvette Cozier (far right). Palmer and Lynn Rosenberg (second from right) are cofounders of the study.

the five-year risk for developing breast cancer. The tool is accessible on the Slone website (bu.edu/slone).

Bertrand hopes to enhance the tool with data from a major study in progress to examine whether mammographic density (dense breast tissue) and other features on mammograms are useful predictors of breast cancer.

“There is well-established evidence that having denser tissue is a predictor of future breast cancer risk,” she says. “If we can more precisely quantify these associations in the Black population, we can help women make well-informed decisions about how frequently they want to screen, whether they need supplemental screening, or whether they’re eligible for clinical trial enrollment.”

The Work Continues

Nearly 30 years after the launch of the study, the team’s work is far from over. Researchers are continuing to assess the short- and long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black women. Early analyses suggest that vitamin D insufficiency in Black women may increase their risk of severe COVID infection and mortality. But there is

much more to learn about the health and economic burdens of the pandemic on Black women, who are more likely than other groups to be frontline workers, and lack paid sick leave and adequate healthcare.

BWHS is also focusing more heavily on aging and cancer survivorship, as well as the role of faith and spirituality on health. The average age of participants is now 65, so the researchers expect more participants to develop cancers, heart disease, and cognitive decline.

Rosenberg has launched a study to investigate the effects of structural racism on Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, building upon a

BLACK WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY THAN OTHER RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS TO DIE FROM CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE, HYPERTENSION, STROKE, AND SEVERAL CANCERS.

2020 analysis that she and Coogan published indicating that racial discrimination may spur cognitive decline in Black women.

“Statistics show that Black women have a higher rate than white women of developing this disease, but we don’t know why,” Rosenberg says. “We hope to gain a better understanding of the factors that can lead to healthier aging.”

The team is also turning more attention to stroke and cardiovascular disease in research led by BWHS investigator Shanshan Sheehy, a Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine assistant professor of medicine. Sheehy has observed an elevated risk of stroke among participants who had a history of preeclampsia, a common and severe hypertension-related pregnancy complication, particularly in Black women.

“These findings show that we need to increase awareness of pregnancy complications as a risk factor for stroke,” says Sheehy, who is also exploring whether moderately common genetic mutations only observed among individuals of recent African ancestry increase the risk of preeclampsia among Black women. “Even 20 years after delivery, the risk of stroke may still be high.”

The researchers credit the success of BWHS to the dedicated participants who are still involved. Some have passed away or stopped responding, but 40,000 women continue to share updates about their health.

“Our work would not be possible without their contributions,” Cozier says. “I hope they feel more vested and more seen as we work to understand with them the health issues that they experience.”

Coyne says vital time was lost for her mother to receive adequate hypertensive care, but she hopes the study’s persistence will help prevent other Black women and their families from having a similar experience.

“I feel really passionate about this study, and I’m honored to remain a part of it,” she says. “To see people dying in their thirties and forties from preventable deaths—it just shouldn’t happen. I hope people understand the importance of this work and how it will not only help Black women today, but for generations to come.” ■

D. Brenton Simons, who heads the Boston-based American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society, is a “champion” of one of the world’s most popular activities—tracing your family tree

THIS IS THE
**golden
age** OF
GENEALOGY

BY AMY LASKOWSKI

↙
*A BU alum is
at the root of it.*

D. Brenton Simons (CGS'86, COM'88, Wheelock'94), at home in Boston's South End, became a member of the New England Historic Genealogical Society as a sophomore at BU. He joined the society as director of education in 1993 and is now the nonprofit's president and CEO. His own family tree includes Charlemagne and four passengers on the *Mayflower*.

PHOTO BY
CYDNEY SCOTT



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ENEALOGIST and

historian D. Brenton Simons has spent his career helping people build out the branches in their family trees, but he uncovered some colorful surprises when he put a magnifying glass up to his own. His illustrious forebears include Charlemagne, William the Conqueror, and four *Mayflower* passengers. More recent relatives were part of the infamous Dalton Gang, who in the 1890s robbed trains and banks throughout Kansas.

That last ancestral connection especially tickles Simons (CGS'86, COM'88, Wheelock'94), the long-time president and CEO of American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS). Founded in 1845, the society is the country's oldest and largest genealogical organization (American Ancestors

Harvard professor and historian Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (left) says a pattern in Simons' leadership has been opening "the vaults of genealogy to the American people."



is the global brand). "To me, it's a fascinating connection to the Wild West," says Simons, "but to someone like my great-uncle—who I mentioned this to at his 90th birthday party—it was a source of embarrassment. In my experience, most people are fascinated by these things."

Since joining NEHGS in 1993 as its director of education, Simons has held almost every position in the non-profit and has worked to transform it into one of the world's top destinations for family history research. As president and CEO, positions he took on in 2005, he has helped raise more than \$100 million for the society and seen its membership grow to 400,000 people. Millions more visit its website to access the 1.4 billion names in the databases. Its Boston office, on Newbury Street, is the anchor location of the popular PBS series *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.*, which is famous for bringing celebrity guests to tears with moving—even shocking—revelations about their family trees.

Gates, the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University, describes Simons as a champion of the field.

"It seems to be that one consistent pattern in Brenton's leadership has been opening the doors of the vaults of genealogy to the American people, so that people understand that genealogy is for everyone," Gates says. "Everyone descends from ancestors. And those ancestors are in suspended genealogical purgatory waiting to be discovered. He's the perfect leader of the leading genealogical society in the United States."

Gates is an honorary trustee of NEHGS and serves on the advisory board of the recently launched 10 Million Names initiative, which aims to recover the identities of the 10 million people enslaved in America before emancipation in an effort to find their living descendants. The launch was spearheaded by Ryan J. Woods (Wheelock'05,'06), executive vice president of NEHGS. Researchers say much of the project will rely on gathering oral histories and accessing previously undiscovered materials, such as family trees found in bibles.

COURTESY OF NEHGS

Much of Simons' free time, not surprisingly, mirrors his professional passion. He is president of the American Friends of St George's Chapel & the Descendants of the Knights of the Garter, an organization that helps to financially support and volunteer at St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle and its surrounding buildings. He's received many honors for his non-profit leadership work and guidance in the fields of genealogical research and history, including the first-ever John Adams Medal from the Sons of the Revolution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Bradford Award from the Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, Mass., for his work in commemorating the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the *Mayflower* and promoting the history of the indigenous Wampanoag people. He's written books, including *Witches, Rakes, and Rogues: True Stories of Scam, Scandal, Murder and Mayhem in Boston, 1630–1775* (Commonwealth Editions, 2005).

Historian and author Doris Kearns Goodwin says Simons' dedication to the study of family history "has not only helped educate and inspire countless historians and authors like me, but has also had immeasurable impact on millions of people who seek to learn about their past and make connections to today."

Bostonia spoke with Simons about why people are fascinated by their family histories, the field's Brahmin roots, and how genealogy combined with DNA results can lead law enforcement to big breaks in previously unsolved cases.



COURTESY OF NEHGS (2)



Bostonia: When did your interest in genealogy start?

D. BRENTON SIMONS: I was lucky because all four of my grandparents were very interested in history and genealogy. And I love hearing the family stories. And so, late in their lives, I was able to go to NEHGS while I was at BU and do research on our families and share it with them. And now, as I look back, I'm so glad I could do that and connect with them about something they cared about, and I cared about too.

Why was the NEHGS formed, and why in Boston?

Genealogy is one of the most popular activities in the world. Recordkeeping started here in New England, at the very first moment; town records of births, marriages, and deaths proliferated. So, if you have New England ancestry, it is generally because those records provide a very fruitful experience. In other parts of the country and other parts of the world, record sets are sometimes missing, damaged, or destroyed, or were not kept. So, it was natural that this area realized first that we could use these records to create

In 2014, the New England Historic Genealogical Society honored historian and author Doris Kearns Goodwin with its Lifetime Achievement Award, and discovered that she is a cousin of several US presidents, including William Howard Taft and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The New England Historic Genealogical Society on Newbury Street is temporarily closed to visitors while it undergoes renovations and an expansion. The new facilities, which will reopen in 2024, will include a lecture hall, a museum store, and exhibition space and archives for the society's Jewish Heritage Center.

lineages, and that was really the founding of the institution.

There were great institutions in Boston, such as the Boston Athenaeum, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and universities. So, Boston is a center of learning and a natural place for an institution like this to spring up. And our founders realized that records were not being preserved and that people were curious about their roots.

It's important to note that this is not just a white Anglo-Saxon activity. I've been excited to help research Irish, Italian, Jewish, and African American [ancestries] and push for more work in those areas.

One of the exciting ways in which we do that is we work with Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who is a board member of the society, and do all the fact-checking for *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* What "Skip" Gates does so well is show the unlikely pairings of how people are related to each other, how we are all related to each other. We love being a part of something like that.



HOW TO START YOUR OWN FAMILY TREE

1 Identify what you know.
The easiest place to begin is with yourself and your parents. Write down information you are certain of: names, relationships, and dates; places of birth, marriages, and deaths. Interview family members too.

2 Create a goal, and go slowly.
Pick one intriguing individual to focus on at a time. Multitasking—or skipping generations—can lead to confusion and mistakes. You don't want to attach the wrong person to your family tree.

3 Research.
The internet and the library are the best places to access records (like birth, marriage, death, divorce, census, and immigration documents) and newspaper clippings. AmericanAncestors.org, FamilySearch.org (the Mormon Church), and Ancestry.com are three of the most popular websites for this type of information.

4 Record, and stay organized.
Write everything down (on a family chart, for instance), try alternative spellings if you are stumped, and click through to the original record instead of relying on the transcription, which may have errors.

5 Evaluate what you have found, and form your next question.
Adapted from the American Ancestors/NEHGS Getting Started Guide www.americanancestors.org/tools/getting-started

➤ **Interested in learning more?** BU's Center for Professional Education offers online courses and a certificate program in genealogy studies.

One of the things that my staff does is work on special projects. You might have the proverbial three brothers who came to the US together, and their descendants want to figure out whether they actually came together. Were they brothers? And about half the time, these things are correct. And the other half of the time, we find out that something else happened. We can use DNA testing as a diagnostic tool when it comes to questions in genealogy. Obviously, another use is for paternity questions.

So, I call this the golden age of genealogy. Today, records are available that you couldn't have put together in a whole lifetime of going around to courthouses and other repositories. Now, vital records, probate, deeds, DNA results—the things that are online are so amazing. And one of the ways in which we've responded to this as an organization is to provide services to help people find these [records]. If they want to figure out whether this was a myth, we're able to help. We provide services and are not just a passive library, which we were 20 years ago.

If someone tells you they're going to take a DNA test, do you ever say, "You might want to think first about what you're going to find"?

In my experience, most people are fascinated by those things. Unless [a finding] involves them personally or a parent, and they feel they have to be discreet about the information or reveal something they don't like, people usually are fascinated.

I'm thinking of an example—a lot of people discover their mother or father married and divorced someone and just never mentioned it. So, after their death, they find out that their parents had another marriage or even another family. That is the kind of thing that can stir up emotions.

But what I tell people is kind of the opposite: if there are things that are potentially embarrassing for your family, it's better to tell them now. A DNA test will reveal things, and you can't control whether someone else is taking a test or not [and your family discovers the outcome]. Better to have these conversations rather than someone being surprised through a DNA test.

As we approach our bicentennial [in 2045], we're communicating with people of different backgrounds. And one of the things happening now is that we purchased the adjacent building on Newbury Street and are reconstructing that building. Our new "discovery center" will have families and children come to learn something of their history, aimed at an ethnically diverse audience. The new building will show the science and technology aspects of what we do, because we do so much work involving DNA.

How has the field changed, with the development and expansion of DNA testing?

Obviously, that's huge. DNA tests are phenomenal for genealogy and genetic genealogy, which is used in solving crimes. I give talks on it all the time. It was used in solving the Golden State murder case [the serial killer who murdered more than a dozen and raped more than 50 people in California in the 1970s and 1980s] and in many, many other cases. And for the average genealogist, it's an important tool in your tool kit because it can help solve problems, even those centuries or generations old.

The NEHGS collection, one of the largest in the country, includes manuscripts from the 14th century and many primary source documents, like this family record.

Simons' lithographed family tree was created by his great-great-great-great-grandfather.



CYDNEY SCOTT (TOP, BOTTOM RIGHT), GAVIN ASHWORTH, COURTESY OF NEHGS



Simons holds an antique edition of the *New York Times* magazine with his great-great-grandfather, Ashbel P. Fitch, on the cover.





The NEHGS 10 Million Names project aims to document and trace the descendants of the approximately 10 million individuals enslaved in America from the end of the 16th century through emancipation.

The norm on DNA testing, in the vast percent of cases, is just to discover your maternal or paternal haplogroup [a genetic population with a shared ancestor]. Then the ethnic and national numbers are based on probability models. And I tell people also to go back every six months and look, because your numbers will have shifted.

Oh, that's interesting.

You'll be more Scottish this month and more French next year. You just don't know because, obviously, the results are being refined; the more people take a test, the more data is collected, and it does shift things. A lot of modeling goes on there.

Genealogy is used to solve decades-old mysteries—like the Golden State murders.

Yes. For instance, my staff worked on the Lady of the Dunes murder case in Provincetown a few years back. [The murder of a woman found in the dunes of Provincetown, Mass., was solved in 2023, after almost 50 years.] One of the ones I loved was the case of Richard III, exhumed from a car park in Leicester,

England. I know the archaeologists who did that, and [Richard III's descendants were traced] genealogically [with the help of DNA samples].

I have a slew of cases I give lectures about around the country where some long-standing mystery has been solved using DNA and genealogy. You can't just do the DNA without genealogy. Both disciplines come into play.

Tell us about the 10 Million Names project.

What we plan is the most ambitious African American research project of its kind ever undertaken. And it is essentially this: to take the approximately 10 million individuals enslaved in America from the end of the 16th century through emancipation, document them, and trace their descendants. There has never been a systematic study like this. The idea behind it, at least in part, is to provide heritage, legacy, and history to people who are disenfranchised from it. The feeling used to be that African American research was so difficult that you would hit a brick wall right away. By turning it around and going from the enslaved person downwards, we actually can bring a lot of people their family history.

I have to credit my colleague Richard Cellini, who works for us and is director of the Harvard Slavery Remembrance Program. He put together the Georgetown Memory Project, and we're also

helping trace the descendants of the 272 enslaved persons that Georgetown University sold in 1838. When you are in communication with a descendant, there's this amazing thing that happens, which is suddenly they connect to a story that they didn't know.

One of the 10 Million Names [honorary] board members is Ketanji Brown Jackson (Hon.'23), an associate justice of the US Supreme Court. When Jackson was nominated [to the Supreme Court], she made a speech at the White House about presumably being the descendant of slaves. Sarah Dery on my research team jumped on this and started looking at her ancestry, and we were able to confirm that there are enslaved individuals in her ancestry.

Why do you think people want to learn more about their family histories?

I think there is an innate curiosity in every woman and man about where they come from and what their legacy will be. Grandparents like to do this with their grandchildren in mind, and people like to do it to explore their self-identity. People do it for connection; they do it for joy. They do it because they like detective work.

For older people, it keeps them mentally engaged and very active doing research. That has many health benefits. And there is data that show that when young people are exposed to family history, it gives them a greater sense of self-purpose. So, as history is taught less in schools, we see this as a great opportunity, and really a duty, to try to put it back. We have an active education program funded by the authors Tabitha and Stephen King; we offer a curriculum to teachers, and kids love this.

The other thing is it's in no way political; people on both ends of the spectrum see the value in young people learning about history. We don't color it with opinion, politics, or angles. We simply provide data, and [teach] how to collect it and how to engage in it in ways that we think are constructive. So, there's this wonderful social benefit to history and to genealogy that is now getting much more attention. And we love that. ■

R. W. HARRISON, PHOTOGRAPHER, SIX GENERATIONS, SELMA, ALA., CA. 1893. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



BU QUEER AUTHORS SPEAK OUT ON BOOK BANS, AND WHAT CENSORSHIP MEANS FOR ALL READERS

BY ALENE BOURANOVA | ILLUSTRATIONS BY MALLORY HEYER

BOOK BANS HAVE REACHED A RECORD HIGH OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS.

The number of demands to remove books from library shelves topped 1,200 in 2022—more than double the total from 2021 and marking a 20-year high, according to the American Library Association. PEN America’s Index of School Book Bans listed 1,477 instances of book bans in schools across the country, representing almost 900 different titles, from July 1 to December 30, 2022. The targets were overwhelmingly titles by and about people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals, according to PEN America.

It all marks a major shift from when Sarah Prager published her first book, in 2017.

Prager (CAS’08) is the author of several queer history books for children and young adults. Her titles *Queer, There, and Everywhere: 27 People Who Changed the World* (HarperCollins, 2017) and *Rainbow Revolutionaries: 50 LGBTQ+ People Who Made History* (HarperCollins Children’s, 2020) have both been placed on “restricted” lists or singled out by legislators for removal from schools.

When *Queer, There, and Everywhere* came out, Prager says, “I was so heartened by the inspiring reception it received from queer youth and grateful teachers, librarians, and parents. I think I got one homophobic email in years.” Now, every time she gets a Google alert about her work, “instead of a book review, it’s another ban.” And when she checks her social media mentions, “I’m getting called a groomer and a pedophile, like other authors of queer children’s literature. I dread alerts now.” Prager no longer shares where she lives—for safety reasons, she says.

Of course, book bans aren’t new. Classics like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* have long faced bans from classrooms over their use of racist language and stereotypes.

But the recent ban attempts are more and more the result of parents’ rights coalitions—such as the conservative juggernaut Moms for Liberty—targeting books with antiracist or LGBTQ+ themes as inappropriate for children. What’s more, they increasingly have local legislation to support them.

One example is Texas House Bill 900, which requires book vendors to assign ratings based on the prevalence of references to sexual activity. In school libraries, books with “sexually relevant” ratings (containing sexual material that is part of a school’s mandatory curriculum) would require parental permission to check out. Books with “sexually explicit” ratings (containing sexual material that is “patently offensive” and is irrelevant to a curriculum) would be removed from shelves. (Texas law defines “patently offensive” as materials that are an affront to “current community standards of decency.” It does not define the community standards.)

Besides Texas, book bans are most prevalent in Florida, Missouri, Utah, and South Carolina, PEN America has found.

“I still want people to discover my work,” Prager says. “But the more people who discover it, the more it’s put at risk of them trying to censor it.”

Bostonia spoke to Prager and fellow queer authors—Jillian Abby (Questrom’04), who wrote the memoir *Perfectly Queer: Facing Big Fears, Living Hard Truths, and Loving Myself Fully Out of the Closet* (Hay House Inc., 2023), and Christopher Castellani (GRS’99), author of the novel *Leading Men* (Viking, 2019) and artistic director of the creative writing nonprofit GrubStreet—about the current state of censorship and what book bans mean for readers of all identities.

Bostonia: Banning books from schools and libraries is about controlling the flow of information to readers. What do you think drives the desire to ban certain information?

JILLIAN ABBY: I think it all boils down to fear. I see a fear in parents that if their children know that LGBTQ+ people exist, then they’ll start asking questions. Or maybe their children will question if they may be LGBTQ+ themselves. I understand the concerns from a parent’s perspective—especially those in communities that are trying to ban books—that people won’t support parents whose child comes out. I understand that there is a very real fear that they won’t be accepted in their community.

The issue here is—and particularly in Florida, where I live—that we’re taking beliefs and holding them out as if they’re facts. And then we’re taking facts and holding them out as if they’re beliefs. But you can’t deny the existence of LGBTQ+ people; LGBTQ+ people exist. That is not a belief; that is a fact. That should be something that we can educate on. Now, how awesome Pride is? Fine; that’s subject to interpretation, and we don’t have to teach about that. But to deny the existence of nonheterosexual identities, particularly when for some historical figures their identity shaped their life and who they were in the world? That’s strange to me.

CHRISTOPHER CASTELLANI: Writers—novelists, fiction and nonfiction writers, poets, children’s authors—are all truth tellers. We’re revealing literal and emotional truths; we are mirrors back to the culture. It actually makes sense to me why some people are afraid of reading LGBTQ+ books, because a lot of people don’t want to challenge their assumptions [about the world]. It’s way more comforting to be angry and make a boogeyman out of a culture than it is to really investigate that culture or a person in their full humanity. That takes work—and most people don’t want to do that work. We’re all guilty of that on some level.

But the irony, of course, is that if people actually read these books and read about the experiences that are told by these truth tellers, they would start to break down their fears and be liberated from them. But they don’t

want to do a deep investigation of their own lives and their own complicity in the marginalization of others. The main thread here is that people are afraid. They’re going to read these books and feel like they’re complicit and being held accountable, and that’s not pleasant a lot of the time.

Sarah, your work has been the subject of bans. What would you like people who may be afraid of your books to know?

SARAH PRAGER: What I’ll say is this: I believe that many people who work to ban my books have not read my books. So, I would ask first that they read them. I would also welcome them to reach out to me to discuss the work with me.

But I would also say to parents who may be scared of their middle schoolers and teenagers growing up and discussing the themes that books get banned over: your middle schoolers and teenagers are already discussing these themes. For them to read books that discuss those topics in age-appropriate ways—that, by the way, have been vetted by major publishers, teachers, and librarians, who are all trained professionals—is an excellent way for youth to explore topics that they and their peers are already talking about. They help youth to further explore topics that they will come across anyway. It’s impossible to



SARAH PRAGER

+ Read a story about the efforts of Emily Talley (CAS’17, Wheelock’17) to launch QT Library, which would be Boston’s first library by and for LGBTQ+ people, at bu.edu/bostonia.

try to deny the existence of LGBTQ+ people by trying to pull every single book in existence with a single mention of them off the shelf, especially when the internet exists.

What's the value of having access to books written by people with marginalized identities?

CASTELLANI: So, I write novels. It's great that there's so much more LGBTQ+ representation in film and TV now. But when it comes to books, and novels in particular, what they give readers is a sense of wholeness in regard to a character's inner life. That is the kind of

thing that LGBTQ+ young people in particular need to experience—getting to know characters on an intimate level, and feeling the emotions and the hearts and souls that they have in common. It's sort of a cliché to talk about seeing yourself reflected in a character, but it's true [and important].

However, it's not as if we only write our books for people who might identify with our characters. Any book or novel that does a good job of representing fully fleshed-out characters is simply increasing the amount of empathy in the world. There's actual science that backs up the fact that when we read a novel and take in a character's experiences, our brains almost can't distinguish whether something was our own experience or

the character's. So, straight readers who read about queer experiences can empathize with queerness without even really realizing it.

Reading through both legislation and materials from parent groups, much of the reasoning behind banning certain books revolves around sexual orientation and gender identity being deemed "explicit" topics for young readers. Why is that erroneous, in your eyes?

PRAGER: I also hear exposure to those concepts referred to as "indoctrination." As if reading a picture book about a prince and a princess is not "indoctrination" to heterosexuality! Kids are constantly exposed to heterosexuality and cisgender gender identity at school: using "Mr." and "Mrs." for teachers; the enforcing of boys and girls bathrooms,

etc. So, banning a book about a prince loving a prince while saying another book about a prince loving a princess has "nothing to do with sexual orientation" is so clearly just discrimination. These bills and bans are not asking to ban the mentions of sexuality. They're only asking to ban the mentions of LGBTQ+ identity. They're not actually asking to protect children from being sexualized or not hearing about sexuality too young. It's all based on thinking that LGBTQ+ identity is inherently sexual while straight identity is inherently not.

My focus is teaching queer history. I'm not trying to talk about what these historical figures did in bed; I'm just mentioning the identity label that they had and what they did for their historical accomplishments, like you would for any historical figure. A book might mention that a man had a wife; I just want to mention that a man had a male partner. My middle-grade book that gets banned, *Rainbow Revolutionaries*, says that someone "loved men and women"—not slept with men and women. It's nothing more than that, depending on the age. A book for older teens might have a teen-appropriate level of discussion that another young adult book at the same level would also have.

ABBY: The thing is, if we talked about what the "problem" is—having inappropriate or graphic content in our classrooms—I think all parents could come together and agree: no parent wants pornography

in the classroom. We could create definitions of what pornography is. We could create standards to evaluate books by. Where it's getting confused is that people are making up their own definitions of what they consider to be inappropriate or pornographic. Anything LGBTQ+ automatically becomes pornographic. Toni Morrison sharing her real, lived experience becomes pornographic. Any mention of anatomy becomes pornographic. If we clearly identified the problem, then it would be easy to find solutions—but the goal is not to actually solve a problem. It's to remove information about LGBTQ+ and BIPOC populations and certain religions. But these parents and lawmakers will never come right out and say that.

Book bans don't singularly impact the queer community; many also revolve around books written by people of color, which goes hand-in-hand with attacks on critical race theory in schools and so-called "woke" curricula. But these recent bans seem to be part of a larger pattern of attacks on LGBTQ+ rights, from criminalizing drag to banning gender-affirming care for minors. Do you feel like this moment is indefinite, or does it have an end?

CASTELLANI: These things come in waves. This is not the first wave that I've lived through. I remember 2004, when there was so much

antigay legislation on the ballot that really swung the election back toward George W. Bush for his second term. That felt like the worst time at the time; there was a lot of antigay violence happening, because the freedom to marry cause was at the top of minds. Books like *Heather Has Two Mommies* were getting banned as well. Teachers were being fired from schools for being gay. And, of course, having lived through the AIDS epidemic—I mean, this is not our first rodeo.

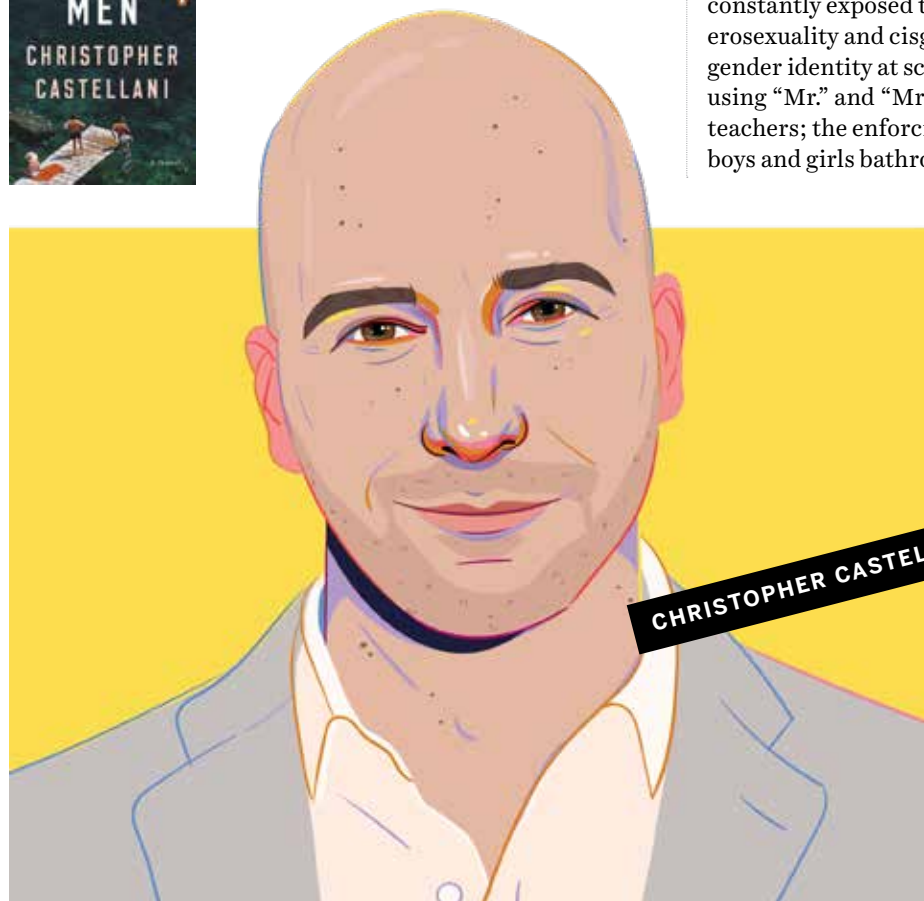
We're going to ride it out, and we're going to keep doing the work we've always

done both on and off the page. We're going to keep writing and mobilizing communities and donating money. Nobody I know has ever thought that the fight was over; this is just the latest battle. And the side of misinformation is going to lose—they always lose. The truth always, always wins out. You have to have that faith.

What can parents and readers do to help show support for banned books and marginalized writers?

PRAGER: They should be telling their school boards, library boards, librarians, and teachers that they support diverse books. Sometimes those folks aren't buying certain books out

of fear that they might be challenged. So, knowing that they have support from the community is really crucial. Proactively requesting that certain books be bought for a library is really easy—look up the American Library Association's "Rainbow List" and request some of those books for your local library. That gives a librarian some protection in the event of a challenge, because they can say it was a patron request. Keep tabs on what's happening at your local school board meetings to make sure that if book bans come up, you show up at the next meeting to lend support to the side of inclusion. Running for school board is a bigger responsibility that you could take on, but there are plenty of smaller ways to help. And, of course, reading these books to your kids and buying them or checking them out from the library is great, too. **B**



CHRISTOPHER CASTELLANI



JILLIAN ABBY

“ I’m Going to Kill Jim Crow ”

In this excerpt from Jonathan Eig’s acclaimed new biography, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s days as a BU graduate student come to life

Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS’55, Hon.’59) was seen by his BU peers as “a charismatic figure, urbane, sociable,” writes author Jonathan Eig in *King: A Life*.

FLIP SCHULKE/CORBIS/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES



In 1951, Martin Luther King, Jr., with degrees



King met his future wife, Coretta Scott (Hon.'69), in Boston, where she was studying at the New England Conservatory of Music.

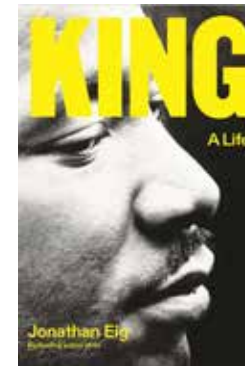
from Morehouse College and Crozer Theological Seminary under his belt, steered his Chevy north from Atlanta to begin his PhD studies in systematic theology at BU. At the time, he was thinking about a career in academia, perhaps after working as a preacher in a small town, writes Jonathan Eig in his new biography, *King: A Life* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023).

During his time at BU's Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, King (GRS'55, Hon.'59), known then as M.L., was recognized as a leader. He attended sermons by Howard Thurman (Hon.'67), dean of Marsh Chapel from 1953 to 1965 and the first Black dean at a mostly white American university, who became his mentor. (The two watched Jackie Robinson play in the 1953 World Series on TV at Thurman's home, according to Eig.)

"King found lasting inspiration in Thurman's beliefs on integration, community, and the interrelatedness of all life," Eig writes. "'There is but one refuge that one man has anywhere on this planet,' wrote Thurman. 'And that is in another man's heart.'"

He would also meet his future wife, a New England Conservatory of Music opera student named Coretta Scott (Hon.'69), in Boston. After King finished his studies, he and Coretta left the city for Montgomery, Ala., "soon to be the crucible for the civil rights movement," Eig writes. "After saying he wanted a job that would place him on the front lines of the fight against segregation, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. had been granted his wish."

The following is an excerpt from Eig's book, described as the first definitive biography of King in decades.



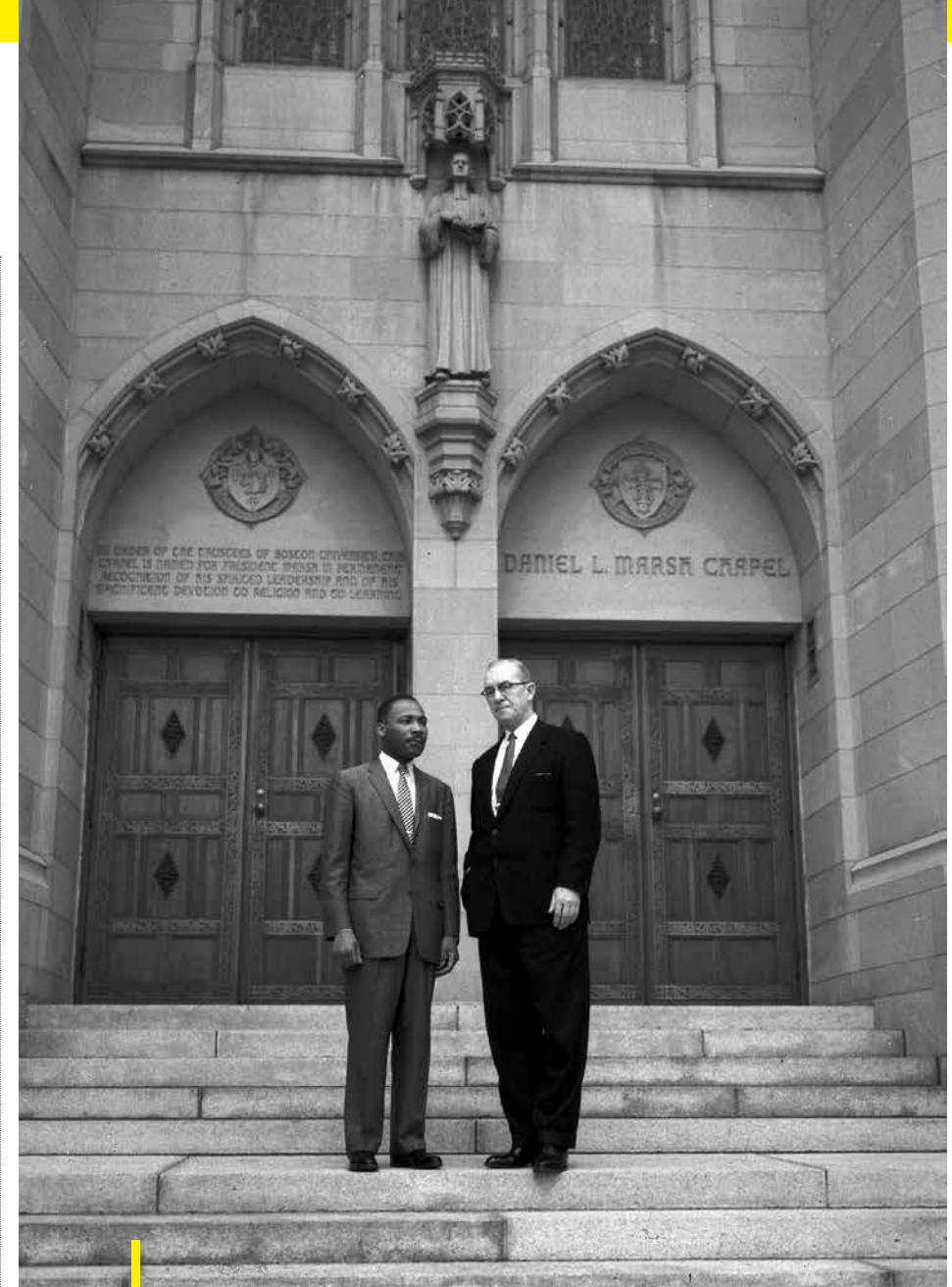
King earned a bachelor of arts degree in divinity from Crozer and graduated as valedictorian, winning a \$1,200 scholarship for graduate study. His parents rewarded him with a car, a green Chevrolet with Powerglide, the new two-speed automatic transmission that allowed for quick, smooth acceleration without the use of a clutch.

But if Martin Sr. and Alberta King had hoped to see their son driving the Chevy around Atlanta, smoothly accelerating from home to church, and perhaps soon hauling grandchildren in the back seat, they were disappointed. In the fall of 1951, King took the car from Atlanta to Boston, where he enrolled at Boston University in pursuit of a doctorate.

Daddy King hadn't been happy with his son's decision to go to seminary. He had more reason to complain now that his son seemed intent on an academic career. M.L. knew better than to argue with his father. "Oh, yes," he would say vaguely when listening to something he didn't want to hear and didn't wish to debate. He knew by now that he didn't need to persuade his father to get his way. If there were any doubt that M.L. had his mind on a career beyond the pulpit, he confirmed it in his application to Boston University. "For a number of years, I have been desirous of teaching in a college or school of religion," he wrote. "It is my candid opinion that the teaching of theology should be as scientific, as thorough, and as realistic as any other discipline. In a word, scholarship is my goal."

COURTESY OF REV. DAVID BRIDDELL (STH'68)

BU PHOTOGRAPHY



King on the steps of Marsh Chapel with Harold C. Case (STH'27, Hon.'67), Boston University's fifth president.

Boston University was a historically Methodist school, with a predominantly white faculty and student body. Daddy King, despite reservations about his son's decision, agreed to pay all of M.L.'s graduate school expenses not covered by his scholarship. Perhaps he was relieved that M.L. had chosen Boston University and not the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, which had been among his top choices, and which might have set his life and career on a dramatically different path.

King chose BU, in large part, for the chance to study with Edgar S. Brightman, known for his philosophical understanding of the idea of a personal God, not an impersonal deity lacking human characteristics. [Brightman (STH'10, GRS'12) was the

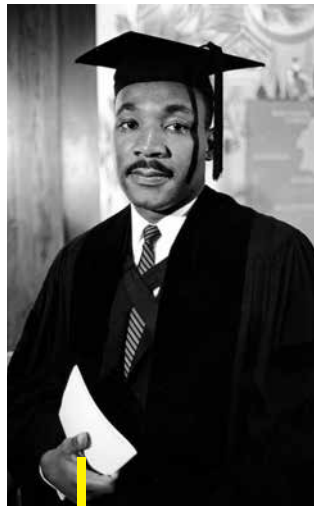
King, who received an honorary degree from BU in 1959. He joins Walter Muelder (STH'30, GRS'33, Hon.'73), dean of the School of Theology from 1945 until 1972 (left), and BU President Harold C. Case (STH'27, Hon.'67) at the University's 1959 Commencement at Boston Garden.



Borden Parker Bowne Professor of Philosophy at GRS.] “In the broadest sense,” Brightman wrote, “personalism is the belief that conscious personalism is both the supreme value and the supreme reality in the universe.” To personalists, God is seen as a loving parent, God’s children as subjects of compassion. The universe is made up of persons, and all personalities are made in the image of God. The influence of personalism would support King’s future indictments of segregation and discrimination, “because personhood,” wrote the scholars Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp Jr., “implies freedom and responsibility.”...

.... In Boston, where he began to introduce himself as Martin, he didn’t take long to find new romances. His approach to women at times resembled a competitive sport, according to Dorothy Cotton [Wheelock’60], the civil rights activist who would later become close to King. He would “try to make sure he could win the girlfriend of the tallest...handsomest guy on campus,” Cotton said. “And that became a bit of a habit, I feel.”

One day, while he was eating lunch at a Sharar’s Cafeteria, he spotted a fair-skinned African American woman, seated alone. King got up from his seat and approached her.



King was unable to attend his BU graduation in 1955, because Coretta was pregnant and because of financial hardships. The University mailed him his diploma. He did come to Boston to receive an honorary degree from BU in 1959.

“You’re not eating your beets,” he said. The young woman looked up and said she hated beets.

King said he felt the same way and asked if he could join her for lunch. Her name was LaVerne Weston, and she was a Texas native who studied at the New England Conservatory of Music. She and King bonded over the cafeteria’s failure to offer an alternative to beets with the chicken platter. LaVerne admired King’s natty wardrobe and warm personality. He talked a lot and bragged a bit, but he asked good questions, and he listened, too. It was obvious that he was flirting, but LaVerne wasn’t interested. King was too short for her taste.

“I’m going to kill Jim Crow,” King told her....

.... After his first semester at BU, King and one of his friends from Morehouse, Philip Lenud, a student at the Crane Theological School, affiliated with Tufts University, rented an apartment at 397 Massachusetts Avenue, a South End rowhouse. The place was piled high with books. Morehouse pennants hung on the wall above the sofa. Lenud, an Alabama native, did most of the cooking; King washed the dishes. King made frequent phone calls home, reversing the charges. The apartment became a hub for young intellectuals

BU PHOTOGRAPHY (2)

King with L. Harold DeWolf (STH’26, GRS’35), a BU School of Theology professor (left), and Case in 1964.

and artists. King hosted a weekly potluck supper for a group he called the Dialectical Society or, sometimes, the Philosophical Club. The men smoked pipes. Graduate students read their papers aloud. Spirited discussions followed. They recorded the minutes and reviewed them at subsequent meetings. At first the meetings were attended exclusively by Black men, but they diversified over time, accepting women and the occasional white person. King was more than comfortable taking a leadership role. With the Philosophical Club, peers saw King already as a leader and a charismatic figure, urbane, sociable, and pleased to be at the center of attention.

“Martin was the guru,” said Sybil Haydel Morial [Wheelock’52;’55], who grew up in New Orleans, attended Boston University, and went to parties as well as casual gatherings at King’s apartment. She would become an educator, an activist, and wife to the first Black mayor of New Orleans, Ernest N. “Dutch” Morial. “He was the leader of it,” she said of King. “He was so even-tempered and so self-possessed and so humble.... And he had a car!”

Boston was not free from racism by any stretch. The Red Sox would not integrate their team until 1959, although Sam Jethroe integrated the Boston Braves in 1950, before that team moved to Milwaukee. Public schools remained segregated in practice. But it was far better than in the South, Sybil Morial said. Boston had art and theater and integrated colleges. From September 21 to September 23, 1951, the Boston Garden hosted an all-star jazz concert with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, Sarah Vaughan, and the Nat King Cole Trio, whose recording of “Too Young” had topped the charts that summer. The Boston Celtics, with Chuck Cooper, had one of the first racially integrated teams in the National Basketball Association. Boston also had a seemingly endless array of ambitious

BU PHOTOGRAPHY (3)



King returned to Boston in 1964 to donate his personal papers to BU, a collection that’s housed at the Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center. Below, a massive crowd gathers on Marsh Plaza for a memorial service for King on April 5, 1968, the day after he was assassinated.

young Black men and women from prosperous families. King attended services at Twelfth Baptist Church, a congregation that had been founded by free people of color in 1840, served as a stop on the Underground Railroad, and had a long history of organized protest.

“It was thrilling because everything was open,” Morial said. “Those of us from the South loved the freedom of the North.” The young men and women often discussed whether to remain in the North, or “Freedomland,” as Morial called it. At first, Morial said, most of her acquaintances in Boston vowed to stay in the North, but their views shifted as they began to miss home and began to see signs that cultural and political reform might be possible in the South. Even in Boston, King felt pulled to return to the South, in part because Boston’s Black community was “spiritually located in the South,” as the scholar Lewis V. Baldwin writes. “I am going back where I am needed,” King said in Boston. **B**



Excerpted from King: A Life (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023) by Jonathan Eig with permission from the publisher.

class notes

CLASS NOTES WRITTEN BY SOPHIE YARIN

1948

ELLEN S. OBLANDER (GRS'48) of Sonoma, Calif., writes, "I decided it was time to give the forties some representation, so here are some memories to start off your class notes before this century flies by: Around the beginning of September 1947, I arrived from California, checked out the dorm (musty!), then found a room for \$7 a week, which became my home for the next nine months.... I loved all my professors, including H. Augustine Smith, Everett Titcomb, and Karl Geiringer, and made wonderful friends, such as Betty Smith and Elizabeth Taylor. I also fell in love with Boston and went to all the concerts I could find and afford, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, at fifty cents a student in the gallery. Somehow, by finding a cheap restaurant and by feasting on many cans of Heinz beans, I even managed to go to New York (my hometown), for concerts and opera, and to the Bethlehem, Pa., Bach Festival, which thrilled me. Altogether, 1947–1948 was a totally memorable academic year—and a totally self-centered year, I realize, as I reflect on it at the age of 98. God has blessed me in many ways, and I hope my memories, with which He has endowed me, may put a little extra sparkle in your eyes today."

1953

MORTON GOLD (CFA'53;'60) of Springvale, Maine, writes, "I noticed no inclusion of alumni from the 1950s in a recent *Bostonia*. While there may not be many of us around, this one is—and still is active. Among my accomplishments: composition of a trumpet concerto in spring 2022 and a performance of it, and vocal music at the Sanford-Springvale Historical Society in September, and conducting the Strafford Wind Symphony in a new work at the Sanford Performing Arts Center in December." Morton's clarinet concerto was performed at Andrews University in March 2023, and he performed his vocal and choral music at Grace Cathedral in Rutland, Vt., in April. The next month, he guest conducted the Biddeford alumni band and the Sanford High School band and chorus in their performances of his music. Morton is the organist at St. George's Episcopal Church in Sanford and Etz Chaim synagogue

in Biddeford. He celebrated his 90th birthday in June.

1957

LEO VANDERPOT (DGE'57, Wheelock'61) of Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y., writes that in May 2022 he reached 90 years of age "without incident; been writing some prose and poetry, flashes for the most part." He says he has good memories of BU. "Don't dwell on Dr. Young, Dr. Blaustein, Dave Trask, and Mary Hawthorne, but Bill Read pops into my head often," he writes. "He arranged a reading by W. S. Merwin in our auditorium one afternoon. Too bad Bill Read's passing was never noted in these pages. In October of 1955, my first experience of college, he was on the cover of the *Atlantic Monthly*, along with Dylan Thomas and Caitlin, his wife." You can email Leo at leov10571@yahoo.com.

1964

LAVINIA KUMAR (CAS'64, GRS'66) of Plainsboro, N.J., published *Spirited American Women: Early Writers, Artists, & Activists* (Lavinia Kumar, 2022), a collection of short biographies of scores of remarkable American women born before the Civil War. Lavinia has written three poetry books and four chapbooks. Learn more at www.laviniakumar.net.

1968

ED FULLER (Questrom'68) of Laguna Hills, Calif., a hospitality industry leader and an educator, coauthored *Red Chaos* (Beaufort Books, 2023) with Gary Grossman, a best-selling author, journalist, and media historian. The book is the third installment in their Red Hotel series, international espionage thrillers starring Dan Reilly, a freelance US State Department and CIA consultant. "The authors do a good job juggling the various plot lines, including one involving a showdown outside the port of Boston between an American warship and two hostile submarines," says *Publishers Weekly*. "Readers will look forward to Dan's further adventures."

CAROLYN MICHEL (CFA'68) of Sarasota, Fla., starred in a Sarasota Jewish Theatre production of *Family Secrets*, a one-woman comedy show by Sherry Glaser, in which Carolyn played five different members of a Jewish family

who migrated from New York to California in the 1980s.

PAUL STEVEN STONE (COM'68) of Plymouth, Mass., published two books in 2023: *The Snow That Never Fell* (Alien Buddha Press), a novel "about the challenges—both poignant and humorous—facing divorced single fathers," and *Cock-A-Doodle-Don't* (AM Ink Publishing), a children's book in which a bevy of farm animals finally rebel against the barnyard rooster that wakes them up every morning at dawn. "As I have elsewhere described: The rooster meant no harm/To all the animals on the farm/He only crowed Cock-A-Doodle-Do/Because that's what roosters do./But the animals hatched a plan/And that's the plot of our book./Filled with giggles end to end/Your children will love to take a look!" Email Paul at paulstevenson@gmail.com.

1970

RONALD DESROSIERS (CAS'70) of Miami, Fla., published two commentaries in the *Journal of Virology*: "My Uncle Charlie" (December 2022) and "The Failure of AIDS Vaccine Efficacy Trials" (January 2023). "My Uncle Charlie" chronicles Ronald's career path and the influence of his uncle, who suffered from paralytic polio. The 2023 article makes recommendations for further government investment in AIDS vaccine efficacy trials. Ronald is a professor at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and a Harvard Medical School professor emeritus.

1971

GARY LARRABEE (COM'71) of Wenham, Mass., published *Salem Country Club: The Start of the Second Century, 1996–2022* (Flagship Press, 2023), his 15th history book, and 11th on golf. This volume is an addendum to his first publication, *Salem Country Club: The First One Hundred Years, 1895–1995* (Salem Country Club, 1995). His next book will cover the first 100 years of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New England. Email him at gary@garylarrabee.com.

TOM ROBBINS (COM'71) of Green Valley, Ariz., published *Postings from the Far Shore of Life: An Incurable Cancer Patient's Reflections on Life*,

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classmates. We
post all class notes,
and make them
searchable by year
of graduation.

Watch a video of Scott Biron demonstrating the art of fly tying at bu.edu/bostonia.

He's Keeping the Ancient Art of Fly Tying Alive

► Master fly tyer and alum Scott Biron meticulously creates flies by hand

THEY COME IN PATTERNS of brilliant reds and yellows, aqua blues, and soft grays, and have evocative names, like Commander, Brookie's Regret, and Gray Ghost. We're talking about the flies that Scott Biron meticulously creates by hand to be used in fly fishing—and each one is as colorful, intricate, and unique as any painted canvas.

"Fly fishing and fly tying are ancient arts," says Biron (Wheelock'79), who retired in 2017 after 20 years in physics and coaching and is now a master fly tyer. "References to fly fishing appear as early as 200 AD. In the United States, there are references to Native Americans tying feathers to hooks that were fashioned out of bone."

These days, fly tyers still use feathers—along with synthetic and natural materials like animal hair or fur, thread, and wire—in their flies, which are meant to imitate the insects that fish like to eat.

It's a secretive art, says Biron. Fly tyers have been known to take their patterns to the grave, he says.

But Biron is working to keep the tradition alive. The New London, N.H., resident learned to tie flies and fly fish in the 1960s; in 2017, he was awarded a New Hampshire Traditional Arts Apprenticeship grant to study fly tying. Today, he's a fly-tying instructor for New Hampshire Fish and Game, and he teaches classes, writes, speaks, and conducts demonstrations around the world.

"A lot of this history was passed down [by] word of mouth. So, I've tried to go back and re-create their patterns and educate people about them before no one remembers any of it." —Cindy Buccini

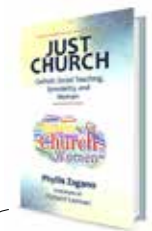


SCOTT BIRON, on Pleasant Lake, New London, N.H., has been tying flies—like Scott's Sunset Streamer Fly (left), created to catch brook trout and landlocked salmon—and fly fishing for decades. Fly tyers use feathers and synthetic and natural materials—like animal hair or fur, thread, and wire—in their flies.

JACKIE RICCIARDI (2)



PHYLLIS (ZIEGLER) URMAN-KLEIN (CAS'64) of New York, N.Y., coauthored *The Last Impresario: A Theatrical Journey from Transylvania to Toscana* (Happy Productions, 2023), with her husband, Peter Klein. *The Last Impresario* is a memoir of Peter's extraordinary life, chronicling his journey from childhood in communist Romania to his emigration to Israel to his long career as an impresario touring with dance, opera, and musical performers. Email Phyllis at urman.klein@gmail.com.



PHYLLIS ZAGANO (COM'70) of Lido Beach, N.Y., published *Just Church: Catholic Social Teaching, Synodality, and Women* (Paulist Press, 2023). Phyllis' longtime advocacy on behalf of women becoming deacons in the Catholic Church led to her 2016 appointment to the Pontifical Commission for the Study of the Diaconate of Women. Email Phyllis at phyllis.zagano@hofstra.edu.



Read a Q&A with Esther Kisaghu (SPH'06) at bu.edu/bostonia.

ESTHER KISAGHU is founder of the Rose Foundation, a Nairobi-based domestic violence nonprofit. Along with a support group for survivors, the nonprofit offers an income-generating project—an opportunity for financial independence.

A Nonprofit in Kenya Helps Break the Cycle of Abuse

► Alum Esther Kisaghu's Rose Foundation offers education, training, and a support group for survivors | BY ALENE BOURANOVA

TO ESTHER KISAGHU, BU was more than just a place to obtain a world-class education. It was also a refuge after leaving an almost decade-long abusive marriage in her native Kenya. And, as she earned a master's in public health, BU would ultimately help her lay the groundwork for a nonprofit helping other Kenyans escape abuse.

Kisaghu (SPH'06) is founder of the Rose Foundation, a Nairobi-based nonprofit that aids survivors of domestic abuse and works to prevent abuse through community interventions. The foundation is named after Kisaghu's late mother, Peninah Rose Wali, a lifelong community activist.

"The onus is on us to educate the masses so that they see this is a societal problem, and no longer a private matter that just affects an individual and their family," she says. "It's a community problem, and it affects all of us."

Kisaghu says the foundation takes many approaches to helping prevent

abuse in Kenya, including informing the public of the extent of domestic violence and providing what she calls social education, such as training youths, parents, and religious leaders.

The foundation also has a support group for survivors; members live in informal settlements and work in the nonprofit's income-generating project, a tea and snacks kiosk. In many cases, Kisaghu says, "women in sub-Saharan Africa are financially dependent on the very abusers they're living with." The work translates to economic independence, "which we know is a social determinant of health," she says. "We are targeting the low-income population to bring them into a place where they can access resources and generate an income. Helping others live outside abusive situations results in being healthy and building healthy relationships, and this, in turn, helps build a healthy nation."

NATALIA JIDOVANU (TOP), PETER KLEIN (INSET)

Death, and the Journey Between (Tom Robbins, 2022), an intimate account of his cancer diagnosis and the amazing new immunotherapy treatments that extend patients' lives.

1973

HAL DANIELS (COM'73) of Tamarac, Fla., published *The Garage Apartment* (Page Publishing, 2023), the story of a teenage love triangle set in the 1960s in his hometown, the Whitestone neighborhood of Queens, N.Y. Hal is a professor of English and writing at Miami Dade College, Kendall. Email him at hdaniels@mdc.edu.

JAMI SALOMAN (CAS'06) of Pittsburgh, Pa., married

BENJAMIN MEYERS in June 2022 in New Bedford, Mass. Plenty of Terrier friends and family turned out to celebrate—Jami is one of eight BU alums in her extended family. Among the guests: (front row, from left) cousins **DANIEL DORFMAN** (GRS'96) and **DAVID DORFMAN** (CGS'86, CAS'88, LAW'91), Nadine Ugalde, father of the bride **CHARLES SALOMAN** (CGS'70, CAS'72, MET'76), Jami, Benjamin, aunt Susan Saloman, cousins **DEBRA (SALOMAN) TUCCI** (Questrom'91) and **RITA (MINSKY) FOSTER** (CGS'60, Wheelock'62); (back row, from left) friends **FRANK FURNARI** (CAS'02, Questrom'07) and **JENNIFER (RYAN) GELZLICHTER** (COM'04), and cousin **LEAH (DORFMAN) DORYOSEPH** (CAS'93). Not pictured is uncle **JOEL DORFMAN** (CFA'65). Email Jami at jsaloman@gmail.com.

KIRSTEN CAPRON PHOTOGRAPHY (BOTTOM); INSET: COURTESY OF FILOMINA STEADY (TOP) AND UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA/JASON GREENE

1974

CARL LAGROTTERIA, SR. (Sargent'74) of Brick, N.J., lost his legs during the Vietnam War when he stepped on a land mine. After returning to the United States, he graduated from BU, earning his degree at Sargent College—as valedictorian. "While in Boston, I accomplished many activities that helped begin a billion-dollar industry, highlighted the abilities of disabled veterans, encouraged Boston to progress with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and taught swimming to autistic children," he writes. In April 2023, Carl published his autobiography, *The Final Me* (Carl Vincent LaGrotteria, Sr.), touching upon his struggles and triumphs as a disabled veteran in America, and his commitment to helping others.

1975

ANDY COWAN (COM'75) of Santa Monica, Calif., received two 2023 Quill Podcast Award nominations, for Best New Podcast and Best Comedy Podcast, for his comedy/therapy podcast, *The Neurotic Vaccine*. Email him at anthrosop@aol.com.

1981

JULIA FREIFELD (CFA'81) of Raleigh, N.C., published *In Each Other's Bones: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Living* (LaGana Publishing, 2022), about her role as caregiver in her husband Mark's battle with multiple system atrophy. Julia is also a classically trained artist; after studying painting and printmaking at BU and in Paris, she worked as a scenic artist for Walt Disney Studios before eventually settling in North Carolina. Email her at jefreinfeld@gmail.com, and learn more about *In Each Other's Bones* at www.juliafreifeld.com.

1983

HERMAN O. KELLY (STH'83) of Baton Rouge, La., was in April granted a 2023 George A. Deer Distinguished

Teaching Award, which recognizes faculty members who have a sustained record of excellence in teaching. Herman is an adjunct instructor in African & African American Studies at Louisiana State University.

MICHAEL RATNEY (COM'83) of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, a US Foreign Service officer, was sworn in as the US ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in March.

1984

RICARDO GUTHRIE (COM'84) of El Cajon, Calif., was appointed Distinguished Associate Professor of Social Justice at Fisk University in August. He was also awarded a \$189,860 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to run a workshop for educators, titled *Racialized Spaces* on Route 66, during summer 2023. Ricardo was named the 2022 Dan Shilling Public Humanities Scholar of 2022 and the 2021 *Arizona Informant* Newsmaker of the Year. He edited a young adult book, *Malcolm X: Get to Know the Civil Rights Activist* (Capstone Press, 2020), written by Ebony Joy Wilkins. You can email him at ricardoguthrie7@gmail.com.

WARREN VON SCHLEICHER (CAS'84) of Chicago, Ill., joined the Chicago office of Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP as partner in May 2023. Warren is a litigator representing insurers and employers in ERISA, life, health, pension and disability claims, and insurance bad faith litigation.

1987

LESLIE ABSHER (CAS'87) of Oakland, Calif., published *Spy Daughter, Queer Girl: In Search of Truth and Acceptance in a Family of Secrets* (Latah Books, 2022), a memoir about growing up with a CIA-connected father, a struggling mother, and a hidden queer identity.

Continued on page 63.



FILOMINA (JONES) STEADY (GRS'66) of Brookline, Mass., retired as professor emerita of Wellesley College's African Studies department in 2019. "I divide my time between the USA and Sierra Leone for family reasons," she writes. "I recently published my memoir, *Woman in Action: Autobiography of a Global African Feminist* (Mereo Books, 2023)." You can email her at fsteady@wellesley.edu.



SHEILA FORMAN (LAW'85) of Santa Monica, Calif., published *Mindful Bite, Joyful Life: 365 Days of Mindful Eating* (TVGuestpert Publishing, 2022), her fifth book and second on mindful eating. Friends can email her at drsheilaforman@msn.com.



RICHARD SLOANE (DGE'62, CAS'64) of Oviedo, Fla., was elected president of the Learning Institute for Elders at the University of Central Florida. You can email him at richardsloane@gmail.com.



➤ Read about the reunion of Black alumni from the Class of 1973 at bu.edu/bostonia.

Terriers Run, Walk, Cruise, Party, Learn, and Celebrate at Alumni Weekend 2023

► Scores of events aimed at bringing together alums from across the University

TERRIERS OF ALL ages returned to campus in September for Alumni Weekend 2023. They had a lot to celebrate, including the 150th anniversary of the College of Arts & Sciences. The three-day event offered some 90 activities—the presentation of Distinguished Alumni Awards, a special reunion of Black alumni from the Class of 1973, a 5K fun run, and a festival on the BU Beach, along with trivia night at Fuller’s BU Pub, tours, lectures, panels, and mixers—all designed to bring the BUiverse together.



Joining the 5K run (and walk) on the Charles River Esplanade: Elman Leung (Sargent’24) (from left), Sargent College Dean Jack Dennerlein, and Kelly Pesanelli (CGS’94, Sargent’96/98).



Black alumni from the Class of 1973 turned out by the dozens to celebrate their 50th reunion, including organizers Alva Baker (CAS’73) (from left), Linda Keene (Questrom’73), Sue Brown Peters (DGE’71, Wheelock’73), Beverly Headen-Moss (CFA’73), and Manfred Hayes (Questrom’73). The tight-knit community of alums has maintained relationships over the decades—within their class and with Black graduates a few years ahead and behind them. “We had our own newspaper, our own student union, our own sororities and fraternities, our own choral groups,” says Keene, who spearheaded the reunion.



The Back to BU Beach Festival was a family affair for Jon Burnim (Wheelock’97) and Christina Rice (LAW’07/13), assistant dean of graduate, international, and online programs at the School of Law, and their kids, Annabelle, 7, and Owen, 3.



The Favorite Poem Project and the BUAA hosted a poetry reading in celebration of the project’s 25th anniversary and the CAS 150th anniversary. Maggie Dietz (GRS’96), a poet and former director of the project, reads “The Snow Man” by Wallace Stevens. The project was founded by Robert Pinsky, the 39th poet laureate of the United States and a BU William Fairfield Warren Distinguished Professor.



Carolyn Collins (ENG’94/00) (left) and Angela Gomes (CAS’01, LAW’05) at the Menino Scholars 50th anniversary reception. The scholarship is a full-tuition merit scholarship awarded to graduates of Boston Public Schools.



Connell Tar (Questrom’73) (from left), Anthony Williams (CAS’75, Questrom’78), Jim Skrekas (Wheelock’73), and Ellen Skrekas at the Golden Terriers reception at the Dahod Family Alumni Center.



Read our profile of Mike Grier (CAS'97) at bu.edu/bostonia.

MIKE GRIER (CAS'97) (center), with San Jose Sharks assistant general manager Joe Will (left) and president Jonathan Becher, is introduced as the Sharks new general manager on July 5, 2022.



Alum Mike Grier Is Hockey's First Black General Manager

► The retired NHL player, now with the San Jose Sharks, tapped a fellow alum as coach | BY JOHN ROSENGREN (GRS'94)

MIKE GRIER NEVER backed down from a challenge. As a six-foot-one, 225-pound forward, he won a national championship with the BU men's hockey team and had a 14-year career in the National Hockey League by pounding opponents with bruising checks. Now, as the general manager of the NHL San Jose Sharks, he's channeling that fearlessness into the next phase of his hockey career, this time making history as the first Black general manager in the NHL.

"I always put pressure on myself to do the job right, to be successful, not too dissimilar from as a player," says

Grier (CAS'97). "Hopefully, I'll be able to open the door for Black people behind me so owners and others can see that they can do the job."

At BU, Grier's play helped the Terriers win the national championship to cap the 1994–95 season, and earned him All-American honors. In 1996–97, his rookie season with the Edmonton Oilers, Grier became the first US-born Black player who had trained exclusively in the States to play in the NHL. He stayed for 14 seasons, playing 1,060 games with four teams (the Oilers, Washington Capitals, Buffalo Sabres, and San Jose Sharks).

After Grier retired as a player in 2011, he scouted for the Chicago Blackhawks, was an assistant coach for the New Jersey Devils, and was working as a hockey operations advisor for the New York Rangers when the Sharks tapped him to become general manager. Three days after he was hired, on July 4, 2022, he shepherded the team through the amateur draft. Before the month was over, Grier hired a new coach, David Quinn (CAS'89, MET'96), who played for BU from 1984 to 1988 and coached the team from 2013 to 2018.

Grier had known Quinn since his playing days, when Quinn ran preseason skates for the Terriers. Quinn was a like-minded Terrier, influenced by then head hockey coach Jack Parker (Questrom'68, Hon.'97). "Jack's the tie that binds all of us former Terriers," Grier says. "He definitely shaped the way we see the game."

COURTESY OF ESTHER DUBE

1990

ELIZABETH NORDBERG STOKES (COM'90) of Cambridge, Mass., published *New American Funerals* (18th and Fairfax Press, 2022), a comprehensive guide to nondenominational end-of-life ceremonies. "As a professional humanist celebrant, I have been designing and delivering funerals and end-of-life services in the Boston area for a number of years," she writes. "There was a complete lack of up-to-date and practical guidance on how to create meaningful nonreligious American funeral ceremonies, so I decided to write the book." Learn more by visiting www.ceremoniesforlifeanddeath.com.

1991

JORGE BOSCH (COM'91) of Palm Springs, Calif., published *Dear Gosei: A Young Man Confronting His Past* (Jorge Bosch, 2023). "Dear Gosei is the story of a young man who suffered traumatic abuse during his young age and, when he turns 26, embarks on a journey of self-discovery to find out about his past and confront the people who hurt him," Jorge writes.

1995

SEAN SWEENEY (COM'95, CAS'95, Sargent'99) of Dorchester, Mass., is a clinical adjunct instructor of speech, language, and hearing sciences at BU's Sargent College of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences. In January 2022, he appeared on *Jeopardy!*, fulfilling a longtime dream. Friends and former classmates can email Sean at ssweeney@bu.edu.

1996

TAK (KENNOY) ERZINGER (CGS'94, CAS'96) of Zurich, Switzerland, published *Tourist* (Sea Crow Press, 2023), a collection of nature poems that expound on a lifetime of experiences of loss, acceptance, discovery, and a search for identity.

1997

DAVID PENDERY (COM'97) of Taipei, Taiwan, published his third book about Taiwan, *Transnational Taiwan: Crossing Borders into the 21st Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022). David is an associate professor in the department of applied linguistics at the National Taipei University of Business.



AP PHOTO/JEFF CHIU; UPI/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

ESTHER (GIAMMARCO) DUBE

(CFA'68) of Warwick, R.I., "found out very soon after graduation that the two things that I need to assure a wonderful mood, day in and day out, are classical music and dogs." In 2023, she celebrated 40 years of canine rescue and was awarded the honor of Game Changer of the Year by Karen Becker, a best-selling author and animal health and wellness advocate. Esther also celebrated 65 years of classical piano study and is still performing, mostly in organ-piano duets at the First Baptist Church of North Kingstown. She taught private lessons for 25 years before getting involved as an accompanist for soloists and choral groups. Esther was also a freelance graphic designer for NBC for seven years and once met a certain red-haired late-night host at a celebration given by the network's corporate division (pictured). "I am now 78 years old, but stay 30 in my brain," she writes.

DO YOU SPEAK BU?

BELOW IS A GUIDE TO HOW WE ID ALL THE schools and colleges. Older colleges/earlier names are in parentheses. Closed colleges are shown in gray.

- CAS** College of Arts & Sciences (CLA—College of Liberal Arts)
- CFA** College of Fine Arts (SFA—School for the Arts) (SFAA—School of Fine and Applied Arts)
- CGS** College of General Studies (CBS—College of Basic Studies)
- COM** College of Communication (SPC—School of Public Communication) (SPRC—School of Public Relations and Communications)
- DGE** Division of General Education (CGE—College of General Education) (GC—General College)
- ENG** College of Engineering (CIT—College of Industrial Technology)
- GRS** Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
- LAW** School of Law
- CAMED** Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine (MED—School of Medicine)
- MET** Metropolitan College
- PAL** College of Practical Arts and Letters
- PARDEE** Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies
- QUESTROM** Questrom School of Business (SMG—School of Management) (GSM—Graduate School of Management) (CBA—College of Business Administration)
- SARGENT** Sargent College of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences
- SDM** Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine (SGD—School of Graduate Dentistry)
- SHA** School of Hospitality Administration
- SON** School of Nursing
- SPH** School of Public Health
- SRE** School for Religious Education
- SSW** School of Social Work
- STH** School of Theology
- UNI** University Professors Program
- WHELOCK** Boston University Wheelock College of Education & Human Development (SED—School of Education)



LEE SHELDON (CFA'72) of Glendale, Mass., had his scripts and video game projects accepted by the Writers Guild of America Archives for their collection. Lee is a TV writer and producer with more than 100 credits to his name, from *Charlie's Angels* to *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and a video game narrative designer. Lee is also a college professor and a proponent of education through game design, with three recent publications under his belt: *The Multiplayer Classroom: Designing Coursework as a Game* (Cengage Learning, 2nd ed., 2020), *The Multiplayer Classroom: Game Plans* (CRC Press, 2021), and *Character Development & Storytelling for Games* (CRC Press, 3rd ed., 2023). Lee collaborated on a video game adaptation of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, released by Microids in October 2023.



CAROL GORDON EKSTER (Wheelock'73;'78) of Andover, Mass., published her newest children's book, *Trucker Kid* (Capstone Publishing, 2023), about Athena, who is proud of her trucker father but misunderstood by her classmates for her enthusiasm about his career. "In addition to highlighting an often overlooked career, this book shows how attitudes can be changed through education," Carol writes. "Athena explains about trucking, and they listen and understand rather than making fun of her." Email her at cekster@aol.com.

They Created a More Hygienic Toilet Seat. Here's the Poop.

▶ Alums launch Cleana, a new company that seeks to make dirty toilet seats a thing of the past | BY SAM THOMAS (COM'24)

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN once said that the only certainties in life are death and taxes, but we might add a third: dirty public bathrooms. Three BU alums may be on their way to eliminating one of those certainties. They've created a new kind of mechanical toilet seat designed to help prevent common everyday messes.

Kevin Tang (Questrom'22), cofounder and CEO of their tech start-up, Cleana (cleana.co), has been working on the project since 2019. The team also includes COO Max Pounanov (ENG'23) and CFO Andy Chang (Questrom'21, CAS'21). The three met through start-up events hosted by BU's BUild Lab IDG Capital Student Innovation Center and MIT's Entrepreneurship Center. (Their chief technology officer is an MIT graduate.)

"Our mission statement is: we just want to make dirty toilet seats a relic of the past," Chang says.

Cleana isn't the first company to make and market automatic toilet seats, but unlike competitors, there are no complicated controls or settings. You attach the seat—treated with an antimicrobial

coating—to a toilet bowl like any other and you're ready to, well, go. After use, the seat raises or lowers (after a customizable time) without batteries or electrical input, using a pneumatic system.

Cleana offers two models: a commercial seat and a residential seat, which automatically lowers both seat and lid after each use. The commercial seat, made for public bathrooms, automatically raises after every use, eliminating unwanted splashes. A user can lower the seat by hand or foot, and once a person has done their business and stands up, a timer kicks in and the seat goes up after 30 seconds.

As part of their research, the team conducted a self-report survey of several hundred people; 75 percent of men responded that they never raised the seat before using a public toilet. In testing the commercial seat at Lucky Strike Fenway, a Boston entertainment venue, Tang says, the auto-lift feature kept the seat about 88 percent cleaner.

"It's one of those things that touches everyone's life—from behind, if you will," Tang says with a laugh.



➤ Read the full story about Cleana at bu.edu/bostonia.

Kevin Tang (Questrom'22) (from left), Andy Chang (Questrom'21, CAS'21), and Max Pounanov (ENG'23) with their Cleana commercial toilet seat.

JUSTIN NARBELLA (QUESTROM'22) (BOTTOM), CHRIS ELLER (INSET)



↓

ROBERT I. SUTHERLAND-COHEN (CFA'68) of New York, N.Y., was nominated for a Career Photography award from the Jazz Journalists Association. In March 2023, an exhibition of his selected photos, *Afrofuturism in Jazz*, was shown at St. Peter's Church in Manhattan. The exhibition featured images of pioneering afrofuturist solo artists and groups, like the Sun Ra Arkestra (above), whom he photographed in 2009. Email Robert at jazzexpressions@gmail.com.



↓

In April 2023, **DEBBIE SICKELS ROBINSON** (Wheelock'83) (from left), **SARAH HOLDEN** (Wheelock'83), **CLAUDIA TILLIS BERK** (Wheelock'83), **JANE (DONOVAN) HUZAR** (Wheelock'83), **KRISTINE (HUBER) BANOS** (Wheelock'83), and **KAREN CORCORAN BIRNER** (Wheelock'83) reunited at Claudia's home in Somers, N.Y., to celebrate the 40th reunion of their Wheelock graduation. They lived in Riverway House for all four years of school. "Some traveled from Massachusetts, some traveled from New Jersey, and some from Pennsylvania," Claudia writes. "Wheelock College was a big part of our lives—some of us are still teaching. College friends are friends for life!"

ROBERT I. SUTHERLAND-COHEN (TOP), ALAN WIEGER (BOTTOM); INSET: COURTESY OF MARVEL DESIGNS (TOP), ROBERT STORY



DENNIS VERMEULEN (CFA'89) of Brooklyn, N.Y., was promoted to partner at the New York office of Marvel Designs, a multinational firm that merges design and visual art expertise with an eye toward sustainability. Dennis earned a Master of Architecture from Columbia University and has collaborated with institutions such as Frank Gehry Architects, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.



DIRK BAKER (COM'91, Wheelock'93;'98) of Worcester, Mass., published his first novel, *Burn* (Kindle Direct Publishing, 2023), about a gambling-addicted baseball player searching for redemption and answers.



KIM NOLTE (CAS'96) of Atlanta, Ga., accepted the position of CEO of the Migrant Clinicians Network, a national nonprofit seeking solutions at the intersection of migration, vulnerability, and health. Kim began her career as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala and "has been working to make the world a more just place ever since." If you work in migrant health or want to become involved, you can connect with Kim on LinkedIn or by email at knolte@migrantclinician.org.

KRISTAN RODRIGUEZ (Wheelock'97) of Humacao, Puerto Rico, and **KATIE NOVAK** (Wheelock'09) of Groton, Mass., published *In Support of Students: A Leader's Guide to Equitable MTSS* (Wiley, 2023), a resource for K-12 educators and administrators seeking to implement equitable and inclusive multitiered systems of support (MTSS) for their students.

2003

JACQUELINE (RUTIGLIANO) CAPUTO (COM'03, LAW'03) of Lake Grove, N.Y., was named to the board of directors of the New York Association of Collaborative Professionals in May 2023. Jacqueline is an attorney at Joseph Law Group PC.

ERIKA LINN (CAS'03) of Irvine, Calif., writes, "During college, I battled with bulimia and, in 2002, made a promise to myself to be a voice of recovery." Today, she's a spiritual psychology and trauma-informed mindset coach trained in more than 10 holistic modalities. Erika offers group and one-on-one sessions. Visit www.sacredstrut.com, or email her at erikalinn@sacredstrut.com.

2004

SPENCER CORDELL (LAW'04) of Fort Myers, Fla., was elected president of the Lee County Bar Association for the 2023 term. Spencer is board-certified in criminal trial law by the Florida Bar and practices criminal defense. In addition to his local activities, he is on the statewide board of directors for the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and likes to catch the Red Sox in spring training every year. Email him at spencercordell@hotmail.com.

2005

BROOKE HOWARD (Sargent'05) of Natick, Mass., was appointed executive director of the Ivy Street

Continued on page 69.



ALUMNI
AWARDS
2023

2023
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS



Danielle De La Fuente
(CGS'04, Pardee'06)

Founder & CEO, Amal Alliance



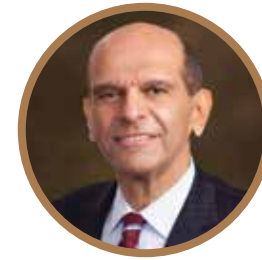
Richard Fecteau
(Wheelock'51)

Former CIA operative; former BU assistant athletics director



Santiago Levy
(CAS'77, GRS'78,'80)

Economist; founder, Progres-Oportunidades program



Mitchell Garabedian
(CGS'71, CAS'73)

Attorney and advocate for victims and survivors of sexual abuse

2023
YOUNG ALUMNI AWARD



Daniella Pierson
(CGS'15, Questrom'17)

Founder & CEO, *The Newsette*; cofounder, Wondermind

We are proud of these outstanding members of the alumni community.

To nominate an outstanding BU alum for a Distinguished or Young Alumni Award:





JANEANE BERNSTEIN (Wheelock'94) of Irvine, Calif., published *Better Humans: What the Mental Health Pandemic Teaches Us About Humanity* (Post Hill Press, 2023), in which she interviewed students, teachers, mental health advocates, and professionals about how to increase personal acceptance and interpersonal understanding to create societal change. She is also the host of *Outside the Box*, a mental health and wellness podcast and event series she launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Janeane is a mental health advocate, journalist, and speaker. Learn more at www.janeanebernstein.com, or you can email Janeane at info@otbseries.com.



KRYSTA RYZEWSKI (CAS'01) of Ypsilanti, Mich., published *Detroit Remains: Archaeology and Community Histories of Six Legendary Places* (University of Alabama Press, 2022), which received three awards: the 2023 James Deetz Book Award from the Society for Historical Archaeology, the 2022 Book Prize from the University of Mary Washington's Center for Historic Preservation, and the Board of Governors Faculty Recognition Award from Wayne State University. Krysta is associate professor and chair of the anthropology department at Wayne State University.



NIRVA PATEL

Inhumane confinement of chickens and other animals marks factory farming. Nirva Patel hopes to gain federal support to curb the practice.

Targeting Animal Cruelty in Farming

► Animal rights activist and alum Nirva Patel, who got fur sales banned in her town, is eyeing factory farming | BY RICH BARLOW

YOU CANNOT BUY fur in Weston, Mass., largely because of Nirva Patel. The tony hamlet 15 miles west of Boston outlawed the sales in 2021, making it one of a half dozen Bay State communities with such an ordinance.

"Fur is extremely cruel," says Patel (ENG'00), who petitioned for the ban. "When trapped in the wild, animals are known to literally bite off their legs from fur traps in order to attempt to return to their babies. In fur farms, animals are in overcrowded cages and suffer from infectious diseases, only to be skinned for their fur."

Patel says she started by filing a citizen petition in Weston. "Town members enthusiastically voted to pass the law in Weston," she says. She later worked with her father-in-law and children to pass a similar ban in Lexington. "The Lexington ban is much stronger, because it sets a precedent to restrict the online sale of fur," she says. "I hope to support other citizens in other towns to work together to end such a cruel and unnecessary trade."

Patel's current crusade involves the federal farm bill—which sets national agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and

forestry policy and is renewed every five years—and its rules and subsidies regarding factory farming. Inhumane conditions for animals destined for the dinner table have long been a flashpoint for animal rights activists, including Patel, a global policy fellow at Harvard Law School's Animal Law & Policy Program. She's the emerita chair of Farm Sanctuary, an advocacy group against factory farming animal abuse.

"The bill has great potential to directly impact what we eat on our plates," Patel says, "but is limited due to its continued financial support for factory farms and consolidated agriculture. Its impact favors the top 7 percent of farmers, billionaire agriculture investors, and wealthy landowners."

"A strong bill would recognize protections for farm animal research, increase subsidies for fruit and vegetable producers, and encourage SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program] recipients to make healthy choices. We need a better bill to change the status quo policy of supporting Big Ag rather than thinking deeply about how to impact human health."



The North Kingstown, R.I., company Structural Stone, LLC, is responsible for the stone fabrication on many significant projects across the country—from the Four Seasons Hotel and the City Hall Plaza renovation in Boston to 1 Vanderbilt and the Brooklyn Bridge renovation in New York City. It's also provided stone for several BU projects, including the campus entry signs on Commonwealth Avenue (above) and Storrow Drive and the new Center for Computing & Data Sciences building. The president is

ANGELA CONTE (Questrom'95), whose father, Tony Ramos, emigrated from Portugal when he was a teenager and began working as a stone tradesman in Rhode Island. He developed his passion for stone into one of the largest granite quarrier/fabricators in North America. After college, Angela worked for her father, at which time his company fabricated the stone for the Marsh Plaza restoration. In 2009, she and her husband, Don, bought one of his companies (StructuralStoneLLC.com), which was named 2022 Fabricator of the Year by industry organization Stone World—an honor Ramos received in 1989. "My father's success is the epitome of the American dream, which provided me the opportunity to attend BU," she says. "Since stone's inherent qualities are those I believe in—it's a product of nature, a quality building material, and is beautiful—I am enthusiastic about it." She adds, "The stone industry is most engaging, and I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing."



School, which provides skills training and support for neurodivergent youth, and its Skills for Life program, an occupational therapy initiative aimed at young adults. Brooke has been with the Ivy Street community for more than 15 years, and designed its Transition to Adulthood program, now the school's signature focus.

2008
CINDY L. OTIS (Pardee'08) published *At the Speed of Lies* (Scholastic Press, 2023), her debut young adult novel. Cindy is a former CIA officer, a national security expert, and the

author of *True or False: A CIA Analyst's Guide to Spotting Fake News* (Macmillan, 2020), a nonfiction book for young readers.

ELIZABETH SICUSO (CAS'08) of Arlington, Va., was promoted to managing principal at Simatree in March. The boutique-style consulting firm specializes in strategy, analytics, and digital transformation. In 2022, Elizabeth supported the growth of the organization to double in staff and revenue, and helped expand support to Fortune 500 companies across various

industries. Email Elizabeth at esicuso@simatree1.com.

ALESSANDRA (CAPPELLINO) SIMKIN (COM'08, Pardee'08;10) of New York, N.Y., was promoted to chief of staff, care enablement, at Elevance Health. Email her at alessandra.simkin@gmail.com.

2010

NICKI NOBLE BEAN (MET'10) of Arundel, Maine, is director of marketing for the Hyatt Regency Cambridge and the Hotel Viking in Newport, R.I. She helps to promote hotels and restaurants, including Paperback Tavern in Cambridge, Mass., for diners, overnight guests, meetings, and events.

DOUG CHIN (COM'10) of Winthrop, Mass., is a senior associate commissioner and director of media relations at the Great Northeast Athletic Conference. Doug is the first person in conference history to hold the position.

SARA MCCABE (Wheelock'10) of Westborough, Mass., was appointed president and CEO of the Wayside Youth & Family Support Network in July. Sara is a licensed independent clinical social worker who also lectures at BU's School of Social Work.

2013

ASHLEY LISENBY (COM'13) of St. Louis, Mo., became St. Louis Public Radio's news director in March. Previously, Ashley produced and edited NPR's *Weekend Edition* and the *Up First* podcast, and worked at WAMU-American University Radio and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

2015

ROBYN BELL (CFA'15) of Sarasota, Fla., was honored with a Kelly Wynn Woodland Community Arts Education Award from the Manatee Arts Education Council in Bradenton in March. In May, Robyn was named director of advancement for the State College of Florida Foundation. She's also conductor and artistic director of the Sarasota Pops Orchestra. Email her at bellr@scf.edu.

MICHAEL J. ROMANO (CAS'15, CAMED'19) of Amherst, N.Y., received his Doctor of Medicine from the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the University at Buffalo. Michael will complete his pediatric residency at New York University's Grossman School of Medicine.

2016

BRITTANY LASCH (CFA'16) of Bloomington, Ind., was appointed to the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music faculty in August



GREGORY AMATO (CAS'01) of Portland, Ore., left his job of many years as an FBI intelligence analyst in 2021. He is pursuing a career as an independent author, spending his days "writing novels about vikings and witches—a whole trilogy, in fact." Learn more about his upcoming first novel at www.amatoauthor.com, or email him at gregory@amatoauthor.com.



ADAM PONTE (LAW'12) of Boston, Mass., was named chair of the civil litigation department and member of the management committee at Fletcher Tilton PC. Adam is a commercial litigation attorney representing businesses and individuals in legal matters such as business litigation, construction disputes and risk management, real estate disputes, and employment litigation. He also handles trust and estate litigation and has represented trustees and beneficiaries before various probate and family courts. Email Adam at aponte@fletchertilton.com.

COURTESY OF NIRVA PATEL (TOP LEFT), COURTESY OF FARM SANCTUARY (RIGHT), JOANNA DEGENERES (INSET)

JANICE CHECCHIO (TOP), COURTESY OF ANGELA CONTE, INSET: ARPIT MEHTA (TOP), SHANNON POWER

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STAY CONNECTED

UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS AND EMAIL.

Continued on page 72.



One Good Deed

AUDRY LYNCH (WHEELLOCK'67)

Mentoring Young Writers from the Gambia | BY SOPHIE YARIN

AFTER GRADUATING from Radcliffe College in 1955, Audry Lynch took her first step toward a life that defied convention by becoming the first female reporter hired by the *Berkshire Evening Eagle*.

"It was all kinds of disturbing to my parents, who were from a generation who said a girl should stay at home until she gets married," says Lynch (Wheelock'67). "But I really wanted the job."

She worked there as a reporter for a short time, then went on to become a teacher, a school counselor, and an award-winning author and expert on the writer John Steinbeck. Today, the 90-year-old great-grandmother is living in Saratoga, Calif. Her chance meeting with an author from the Gambia eight years ago has led to ongoing mentorship of aspiring young writers in the western African country.



AUDRY LYNCH

It all started in 2015, when Lynch met writer Wuyeh "Willy" Drammeh, who was interested in getting some pointers from an American author.

Lynch has published eight books, nearly all of them focused on Steinbeck's life and works. She talked with Drammeh a couple of times a month, sharing her writing knowledge and experiences.

Their working relationship soon grew into a bona fide friendship. When an injury landed Lynch in the hospital, he showed



Members of the Audry Lynch Writer's Club at the Soma Upper and Secondary School in Soma, the Gambia, meet Wuyeh "Willy" Drammeh (standing). Drammeh, a writer, grew up in Soma and now lives in the US.

up with a bouquet of roses. Drammeh, who has since been named one of the Gambia's 100 most influential writers, even dedicated one of his books to her.

During one of his trips back to his hometown of Soma, he met Bakary Baldeh, a teacher at the local secondary school who oversees a burgeoning English-language writer's club.

"I told him about Audry Lynch, and I suggested that we dedicate the writer's club in her name," Drammeh says. "And he said, 'Let's do it.'"

Until recently, according to Baldeh, school attendance in Soma has been low, especially among young girls. However, almost all of the writer's club members are female.

"Girls today want to seize that opportunity to make their lives better," Baldeh says, "and when they see that Audry Lynch is female, they think, why not them also? In the Gambia, men always have the advantage. But it's not like that in the writer's club."

The Audry Lynch Writer's Club was approved in spring 2023, and is now the most popular extracurricular at the school.

Lynch was floored when she heard the news. "I've never been so delighted," she says. "I was absolutely honored."

She plays an active role in the club, serving as a long-distance writing coach. She'll review student manuscripts and offer corrections, revisions, and writing tips by airmail. She also hopes to travel to the Gambia and visit them soon.

The students may be 6,500 miles away, but their pursuit—and their promise—is familiar to Lynch.

"I know how it feels to aspire to become a writer and be told it isn't a good fit for a woman," she says. "This is a lovely challenge for me, to tell them to persist, and that their work is worthwhile."



KATHRYN TYLER (TOP), BAKARY BALDEH



CHEN CAO (CAS'14, SPH'16) of Newton, Mass., (far right) and friends **ERINN BENEDICT** (Pardee'15) (front row, from left), **ELIZABETH THERRIEN** (Sargent'15,'17), **SOPHIA FREGOSO** (CAS'14), and (back row, from left) **PETRA SCHUBERT** (Sargent'16, SPH'16) and **ADITI AMLANI** (Sargent'15,'17) traveled to Mexico City in March to celebrate the 10th anniversary of their meeting through the BU Study Abroad Geneva program. While together, they also celebrated the 30th birthdays of Elizabeth and Erinn.

COURTESY OF CHEN CAO (TOP), JOHANNES HIRN (COM'10); INSET: JENNIFER JAMES (TOP), COURTESY OF JUSTIN BRETON

MARY MCMANUS (COM'76) of Chestnut Hill, Mass., contracted paralytic polio in 1959 during one of the nation's last outbreaks and, at the age of 53, was diagnosed with post-polio syndrome, a progressive neuromuscular disease. At the height of her award-winning career as a veterans affairs social worker, she was told to prepare to spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. Mary immersed herself in a regimen of physical therapy and left her career just three years shy of being eligible for retirement. She went on to run the Boston Marathon three years after her diagnosis—and raised \$10,535 as part of Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital's Race for Rehab team (right). Mary is a motivational speaker, blogger, poet, and author of six books, including a memoir, *The Adventures of Runnergirl 1953* (Mary McManus MSW, 2019). "Hearing the powerful healing story of another," she writes, "gives one hope and ignites a spark of what's possible, despite all appearances to the contrary." Visit www.marymcmamus.com.



CHRISTINE CONRADT (MET'12) of Redondo Beach, Calif., was tapped to write a mystery for Hallmark Movies & Mysteries in April 2023. "I am putting my master's in criminal justice from BU to good use," Christine writes.



KC GRIFANT (COM'08) of San Diego, Calif., released her first novel, *Melinda West: Monster Gunslinger* (Brigids Gate Press, 2023), a genre-bending, supernatural western that reads like a blend of *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Witcher*. KC is an award-winning writer whose horror, fantasy, science fiction, and weird west stories have been published internationally. Learn more, and contact her, at www.KCGrifant.com.



JUSTIN BRETON (CGS'08, COM'10) of Brooklyn, N.Y., joined the Metaverse Collaborative at New York University's School of Professional Studies as an advisory board member in April 2023. Justin is director of brand experiences and partnerships at Walmart. The Metaverse Collaborative is a cross-industry initiative designed to prepare students to succeed in immersive, virtual spaces.



MARIANA KORSUNSKY (CAS'03) of Boston, Mass., was promoted to director at Goulston & Storrs in April. Mariana litigates in complex commercial, leasing, land use, real estate, shareholder, employment, and professional liability disputes.



PETE HALL (Wheelock'96) of Post Falls, Idaho, published his 12th book, *Always Strive to Be a Better You: How Ordinary People Can Live Extraordinary Lives* (Authors Place Press, 2023).

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In May 2023, **SAWSAN (MEHDI) ZAHARA** (Wheelock'87'94) (third from left) and her daughter, **KAREN ZAHARA** (CAS'23) (the new grad), of East Taunton, Mass., each submitted class notes in celebration of their family's long-standing relationship with BU. "When [Karen] was accepted and decided to attend BU, I joked with my children that I ought to paint our driveway scarlet and call it Comm Ave!" writes Sawsan, who matriculated in 1986 as an international student from Lebanon and whose studies were sponsored by the Hariri Foundation, a nongovernmental organization. Sawsan earned a master's and a doctorate from the BU Wheelock College of Education & Human Development. "I got married and had my first child, William," she writes. "I had worked on my dissertation while pregnant with him, and had him on my arm when I graduated in 1994 [inset]. I guess William was destined to go to BU." William (CAS'14) (above right) did just that, double majoring in political science and Latin. His younger brother, Adam (CAS'18) (above left), followed, majoring in chemistry. That left Karen. "Now, I'm joining my mom and siblings in bringing a fifth BU degree to our family of Terriers, making it a family affair," Karen writes. For Sawsan, just one question remains: "Where can I find that scarlet paint?"

2023. Brittany came to Indiana from Bowling Green State University, where she was an assistant professor of trombone. Previously, she was a faculty member of the Boston University Tanglewood Institute and principal trombone for the Detroit Opera Orchestra. You can email her at brittanylasch@gmail.com.

2020
ALEX LO (CAS'20, Pardee'20) of New York, N.Y., produced *Unconditional*, a documentary following three

families as they care for members with mental health challenges. An early cut of the film screened at the Kennedy Center in 2022, and was an official selection at four independent film festivals in the year of its release. *Unconditional* has aired on PBS and received a theatrical release at AMC theaters. In May 2023, First Lady Jill Biden invited cast and crew members to the White House for a screening, where she praised the filmmakers for their "passion and persistence." **B**



DYGO TOSA (CAS'08) and **JANETTE MYETTE** (Wheelock'21) of Hampden, Mass., were married in Cambridge in February. Those attending the wedding included best man **KEVIN YAN** (CAS'08, Pardee'08), maid of honor **REBECCA GABRIEL** (CAS'13, Pardee'13), **SIO TAK SUN** (Questrom'08, MET'24), and **MARIE YOSA**, a 2007 BU Academy graduate.

COURTESY OF SAWSAN ZAHARA (TOP), CASSIE WANG PHOTOGRAPHY (BOTTOM). COURTESY OF GOULSTON & STORRS (INSET)



Jo Farkas appeared in nearly 50 films and television series, as well as a Super Bowl ad and a Pharrell Williams music video.

JOSANNE "JO" FARKAS, a retired school psychologist who, in her sixties, fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming an actor, died May 28, 2023. She was 96.

Farkas (Wheelock'49, '60) was born on May 1, 1927, in Boston and was raised in Newton Center, Mass. She earned a bachelor's degree and later a master's in school counseling at BU. She was a clinical psychologist in the Baltimore City Schools—she'd done theater on the side—before retiring.

"I decided I wasn't going to grow old watching the whales go by, so to speak," she said in a 2018 *BU Today* profile.

She moved to California and costarred in a San Francisco stage production of *Kudzu*, which seemed to launch a second career for her. She went on to land roles in nearly 50 films and television series, including the daytime soap *The Young and the Restless*, her TV debut. She appeared in a variety of dramas

and comedies, including *Shameless*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, *Southland*, and *American Horror Story*.

In 2008, she played Bubbie, a sickly Jewish grandmother, on the show *Weeds*. "I had no words except one burst of Yiddish," she told *BU Today*. "It was incredibly boring—I laid in a bed all day. Whenever I was on camera I was in the bed. And I was on camera a lot. But the food was great—they had great craft services."

She also appeared in films such as *Boxing Day*, *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *Forget Paris*, and *Tank Girl*, as well as a Super Bowl ad and the Pharrell Williams music video for "Freedom."

Farkas was 91 and starting to slow down when *BU Today* caught up with her in 2018. "I was always a compulsive worker," she said at the time, "but I'm starting to be happy doing my crossword puzzles, hanging out, watering my plants. I'm amazed I've finally gotten to that point."

Jo Farkas, Whose Second Act Was Acting, Dies at 96

▶ ALUM FOLLOWED HER DREAM AFTER RETIRING AS A SCHOOL COUNSELOR

PATRICK STRATTNER



Aram V. Chobanian (Hon.'06) with University trustee Alan Leventhal (Hon.'09) (far left) and President Robert A. Brown (right) at the 2006 BU Commencement.

President Emeritus Aram Chobanian, Who Helped Stabilize BU at a Tumultuous Time, Dies at 94

► RECORD GIFT RENAMED THE MEDICAL SCHOOL IN 2022 IN HONOR OF CHOBANIAN AND HIS LIFELONG FRIEND | BY RICH BARLOW

ARAM V. CHOBANIAN, whose brief tenure as BU president in the early 2000s stabilized the campus during a tumultuous period and whose long University service oversaw the growth of the Medical Campus, died on August 31, 2023. He was 94.

Chobanian (Hon.'06) had returned to BU last year, when his lifelong friend, Edward Avedisian (CFA'59,'61, Hon.'22), a noted philanthropist, donated a stunning gift of \$100 million to the medical school. Avedisian said

that he wanted the school renamed in Chobanian's honor, and Chobanian countered that he would agree only if the school was renamed in honor of both of them. The arrangement was consummated, and the BU Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine became the name of the school. (Avedisian died December 7, 2022.)

"How could I obstruct a gift of \$100 million to the medical school that I spent my life at?" a humble Chobanian said at a ceremony announcing the donation.

Kenneth Freeman, BU president ad interim, says Chobanian's achievements as a physician and an academic leader are legendary.

"By every account he was an amazing leader, deeply appreciated for his kindness and his devotion to the great calling of medicine," Freeman says. "He was called to serve Boston University as interim president at a crucial moment, and Boston University is better for his service."

A cardiologist, Chobanian joined the medical school faculty in 1962. He served as BU's interim president, then ninth president, between 2003 and 2005. (He preceded Robert A. Brown, who was president from 2005 until stepping down this year.)

The University had initially hired former NASA administrator Daniel Goldin as president in 2003, only to pay him \$1.8 million when the offer was rescinded after conflicts arose with the

trustees and John Silber (Hon.'95), BU's seventh president and, at the time, University chancellor. That turmoil drew national media coverage.

Chobanian's tenure as president was brief, and officially his capacity was interim. But in recognition of his service and the vital role he played, the trustees officially named him as BU's ninth president at the conclusion of his leadership, dropping "interim" from the title.

Karen Antman, dean of the Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine and provost of the Medical Campus, says that despite his responsibilities in such a turbulent time, Chobanian retained his warm personal relationships with faculty, students, and friends. Many people on the Medical Campus valued his friendship and thoughtful leadership.

"Aram was so many things to so many people—physician, accomplished scientist, scholar, teacher, mentor, leader, and friend," Antman says. "He provided calm and wise leadership, first on the Medical Campus, and then as president of Boston University during particularly challenging times."

"When the next history of Boston University is written," Freeman says, "I believe the author or authors will affirm that among our presidents, none had a greater impact over a shorter term."

Chobanian's presidency capped years of service to the University. He had led major changes as dean of the medical school, a position he assumed in 1988. In 1996, the University added the title of provost of the Medical Campus. During his tenure, he oversaw the merger of Boston City Hospital, the city's public hospital, and the University's Medical Center Hospital, resulting in the creation of Boston Medical Center (BMC), the Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine's affiliated teaching hospital. Today, BMC continues as the city's safety net hospital, with a special mission of serving indigent patients.

"By every account he was an amazing leader, deeply appreciated for his kindness and his devotion to the great calling of medicine," Kenneth Freeman says. "He was called to serve Boston University as interim president at a crucial moment, and Boston University is better for his service."

He was also instrumental in creating BioSquare Research Park, a partnership of BU, BMC, and the developer Spaulding & Slye Colliers. The South End park is home to state-of-the-art life sciences laboratories.

While on the School of Medicine faculty, Chobanian led the division of medicine's hypertension and atherosclerosis section. He also was vice chair for cardiovascular affairs in the department of medicine.

He was the founding director of the Whitaker Cardiovascular Institute, created in 1973 "to foster advances in research, treatment, and education in the broad area of heart and vascular disease," according to its website. And when the National Institutes of Health decided to finance a National Hypertension Specialized Center of Research at BU for two decades, starting in 1975, Chobanian was its director.

After stepping down as BU's president in 2005, Chobanian returned to his work as a University Professor and the John I. Sandson Distinguished Professor of Health Sciences.



Edward Avedisian (CFA'59,'61, Hon.'22) (left) and Chobanian at the celebration announcing the gift from Avedisian renaming the BU medical school the Aram V. Chobanian & Edward Avedisian School of Medicine.

KALMAN ZABARSKY

JACKIE RICCIARDI

Celebrated Abstract Artist and BU Alum Brice Marden Dies

► HIS PAINTINGS ARE HELD IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD | BY CINDY BUCCINI

IN THE DAYS AFTER acclaimed abstract painter Brice Marden died, appreciations and superlatives poured in. He was “one of the most admired and influential artists of his generation” (*New York Times*), a “visionary” (*Vogue*), and “a master of color, light and texture” (*Washington Post*). Marden (CFA’61, Hon.’07) “produced

a body of work of profound beauty and intelligence” (Museum of Modern Art) and “pathbreaking explorations of gesture, line, and color that put him in a category of one” (*Artforum*).

Marden’s career spanned nearly 60 years, and his works are held in museum collections around the world, including the Museum of Modern

Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Tate Gallery in London, and the Kunstmuseum Basel in Switzerland. In 2019, the *New York Times* proclaimed him “America’s grand old master painter.”

Marden died of cancer August 9, 2023. He was 84.

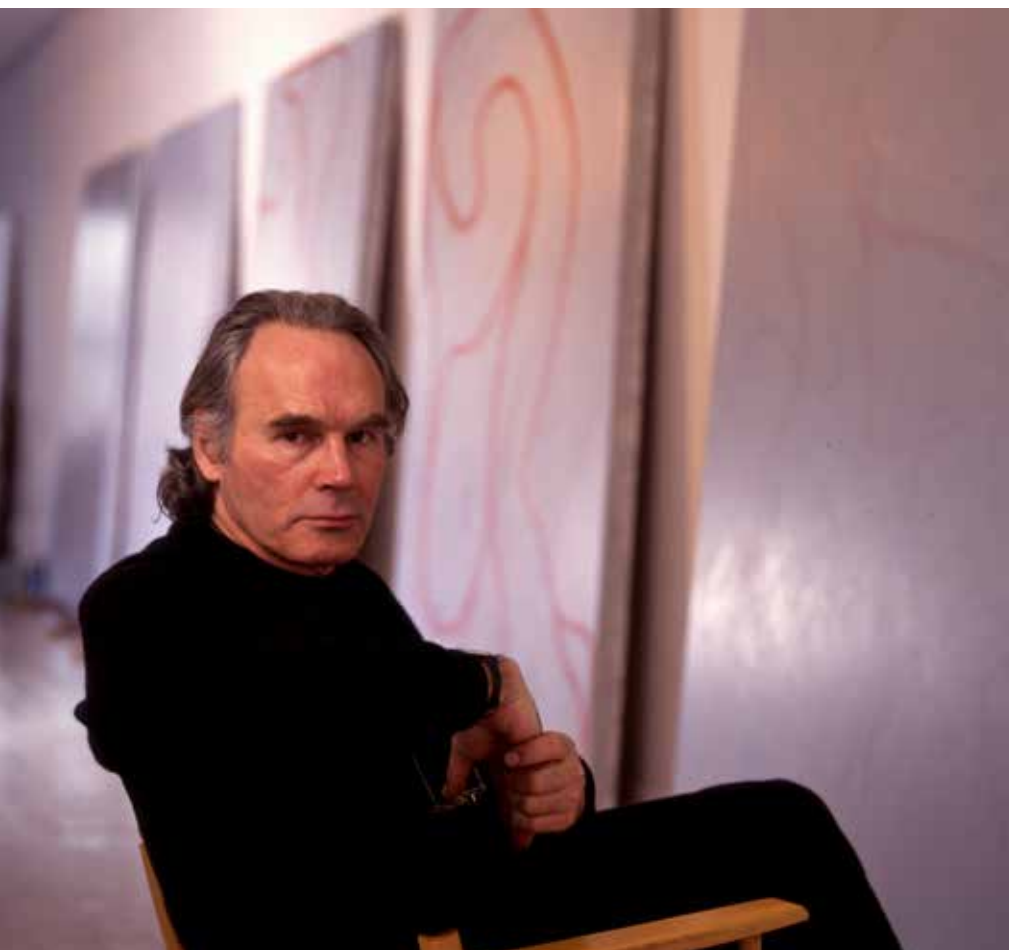
Dana Clancy, director of the BU College of Fine Arts School of Visual Arts, says she last saw Marden’s paintings in 2019, at a powerful exhibition at Gagosian Gallery in New York, which represented the artist.

“It’s hard to use words to describe such materially rich abstract paintings as Marden’s, and it is even difficult to understand their power when only seeing them online or in a book,” says Clancy (CFA’99), a CFA associate professor of art. “I went to see the exhibition because the works really function as they are meant to only when seen in person.

“With Marden’s paintings, a viewer doesn’t stand still looking—the paintings suggest that one move from far to near to look more closely,” Clancy says. “Our movement as viewers in the gallery seems invited by—or echoes—the painter’s quite physical process. Marden painted and moved across his studio space as he worked, using long-handled brushes or sticks as tools, as well as working the surface by scraping it.”

Clancy says she perceives a change in the paintings as she edges closer: “Layers of added and scraped-away wax-based encaustic paint reveal new relationships in paint, color, mark. The longer you look at this work—that at first glance can seem as simple to describe in language as colors and lines—the more you see.”

Painter Brice Marden (CFA’61, Hon.’07) in his studio in New York City on January 15, 1998.



LEARNING THE FUNDAMENTALS

Born in New York, Marden attended Florida Southern College for a year before transferring to BU. In a 1998 *Bostonia* profile, he told art critic and writer Phyllis Tuchman (DGE’66, CAS’68) that he received a grounding in the fundamentals at CFA, and was “made aware of the tradition of being a painter.”

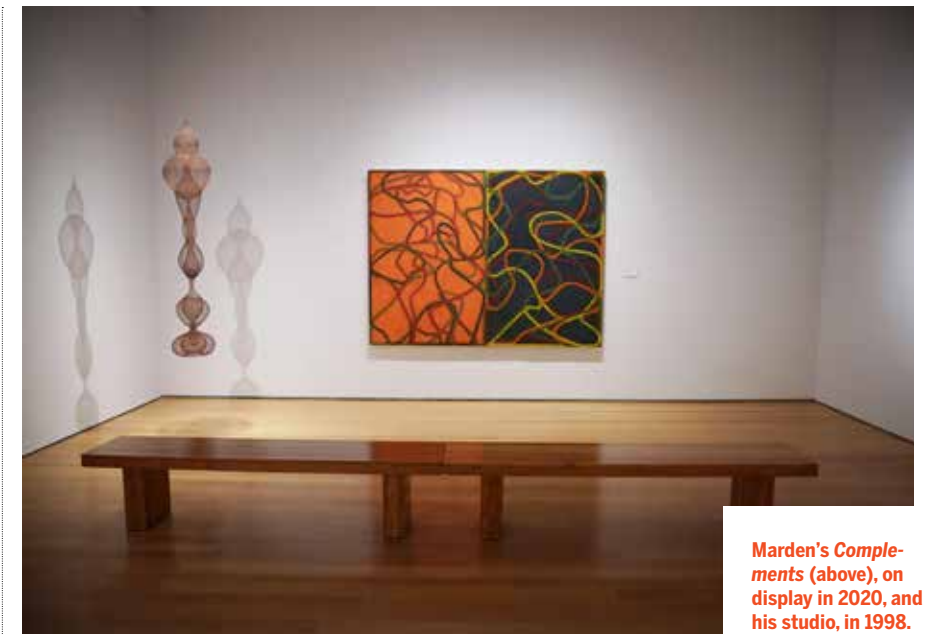
Tuchman wrote, “One of America’s most accomplished abstractionists still remembers how thorough his education was, including drawing from the model and other kinds of figure studies.” But, she wrote, he stopped making nudes when they were no longer required. “I always wanted to make abstract art,” Marden told her.

After graduating from BU, Marden earned a master’s degree at Yale. He moved to New York and took a job as a guard at the Jewish Museum, where he was able to study Jasper Johns’ work during a museum retrospective. It was “an influential moment for the young Marden,” according to *Artnet News*.

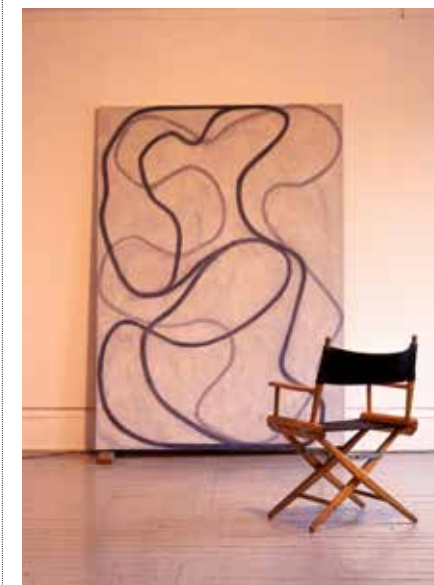
Not long after, he had his first solo show, in 1966, at the Bykert Gallery in New York. “With painting decidedly out of vogue, reviews for this inaugural outing, featuring thickly painted surfaces blended with turpentine and beeswax, were mixed,” according to *Artnet News*. “Undeterred, Marden, by now working as a studio assistant for Robert Rauschenberg, slowly made a name for himself with large, often monochromatic canvases featuring flat, rectangular panes of color.”

Marden was credited with rejuvenating painting at a time when the art world had largely shifted its attention to pop art and conceptual art.

His technique shifted in the 1980s. Influenced by Chinese calligraphy, he began painting with longer brushes, from farther away. In a 2015 conversation with his daughter Mirabelle for *Interview* magazine, he described his technique: “When you’re using a long brush, you have your arm at full length. Basically, it exaggerates the movement



Marden’s *Complements* (above), on display in 2020, and his studio, in 1998.



of your body. But I always start far away and end up really close. Usually, when I am drawing, say with a brush from a distance, I always close in on it and I end up working it with a knife, so every inch of surface gets touched by this little knife. It’s like going from the vague to the specific—closing in on it, focusing.”

Tuchman described Marden as “unimpressed by his recent critical successes.” She noted in the 1998

Bostonia profile that one of his drawings, purchased for \$260 in 1969, had sold for \$380,000 at a Christie’s auction. Later in his career, his works sold for millions; in 2020, his painting *Complements* went for \$30.9 million at auction. At the time, the *New York Times* wrote, “Such are the dynamics of the market for contemporary art that auction prices for Mr. Marden are now almost as high as those for an old master like for Rembrandt.”

>>

VERNON DOUCETTE

JOHN ANGELILLO/UPI CREDIT: UPI/ALAMY LIVE NEWS (TOP), VERNON DOUCETTE (2)

Charles Lindholm: “An Inspired Teacher and an Unsurpassed Mentor”

► CAS PROFESSOR EMERITUS, A “PIONEER IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF EMOTION,” DIES AT 77

Robert P. Weller, a College of Arts & Sciences professor of anthropology, pays tribute to Charles Lindholm, a CAS professor emeritus of anthropology. He joined the BU University Professors Program in 1990, after teaching at Columbia and Harvard. When UNI ended, he moved to the CAS anthropology department and helped to develop and teach the college's Social Science Core Curriculum. Lindholm died June 30, 2023, at 77.

CHUCK WAS AN influential and prolific scholar. He was the author of eight books, and his works are available in six languages. His initial field research was in the Swat Valley of Northern Pakistan. The ethnographic study that resulted, *Generosity and Jealousy* (Columbia University Press, 1982), established him as a leading scholar of the Middle East, and as a pioneer in the anthropology of emotion. He continued to publish on the region, but at the same time his interests evolved toward work in the United States, and toward broad theoretical issues.

His work on idealization and leadership led to the publication of his well-known *Charisma* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1990), to an edited book on the topic in 2013, and to a number of articles on charismatic leadership and romantic love, as well as comparative studies of emotion. He also wrote textbooks on the Middle East, on identity, and on the concept of authenticity.

His influence at Boston University extended far beyond his intellectual renown. He was an inspired teacher and an unsurpassed mentor to generations of graduate students and colleagues. Each of us who knew him gained so much from our conversations—sometimes because of the intellectual inspiration he brought, sometimes because of his wide-ranging personal interests (photography, painting, music, and gardening), sometimes because of the wisdom he imparted about how to overcome some hurdle, and always because he was such a generous soul.

Four dozen remembrances from colleagues and students were posted

within a few days of his death. These are available online (on the anthropology department's Facebook page, Anthropology in the Works). Let me quote just two examples.

Keping Wu (GRS'01,'07) wrote, “I thought of all the pictures he sent us after his retirement, pictures of nature and of his own paintings. They were so full of appreciation and curiosity toward life, beautiful, ugly or cruel. I thought of his writings, on charisma, on love, and on authenticity. They had the same appreciation and curiosity: a scientist, an artist and a child, all at the same time.... Then I see his smile.... It was a smile of acceptance, forgiveness and genuine interest. The warmth in that smile makes people feel seen, touched and included.”

The second is an invocation from Fallou Ngom [a CAS professor of anthropology]:

“I am saddened by the news about Chuck's passing. I used to refer to him as the Shaykh due to his virtues, especially his



Charles Lindholm, a CAS professor emeritus of anthropology, in a 2012 photo with Feyza Burak Adli (GRS'20), then a graduate student.

decency, which I admired. Below is my last message on him in 2021. May his great soul rest in peace....

Your disciples miss you for your retreat is so long.

Make us the pen you write with and the water of your ablutions.

Bestow up again upon us your magnanimous gaze that purifies our lowly nafs!

We miss you!
Fallou, one of your many Murids!”

We are all his Murids—Sufi searchers striving to follow the path of wisdom set by our spiritual guide. So many of us owe a great debt to Chuck, both professionally and personally. It was never possible to repay his many acts of generosity, wisdom, and grace. By paying those acts forward, though, may we keep his spirit alive and active in ourselves, and in all those we may influence in turn. ■

FEYZA BURAK ADLI

in memoriam.

Due to space constraints, we are able to publish only a small number of names of BU alumni who have passed away. If you would like to see the name of a deceased alum listed on our In Memoriam page, please send us their name, school and year of graduation, place of residence (city and state), and a link to a published obituary. Thank you.

1940s

ADELLA P. SLACK (WHEELOCK'41) *Bridgewater, N.J.*
FRED S. HOFFMAN (QUESTROM'44) *Alexandria, Va.*
CHRISTINE C. FARBER (SARGENT'46) *Hyannis, Mass.*
SHIRLEY GUSTAFSON CHASE (SARGENT'47) *St. Augustine, Fla.*
LUCY S. KALAJIAN (PAL'47) *Weymouth, Mass.*
ANN M. BROWN (WHEELOCK'48) *Osterville, Mass.*
NORMAN COHEN (DGE'48, CAS'50, GRS'51,'62) *Fort Collins, Colo.*
CHARLES F. GALLOWAY (DGE'48, CAS'50) *Taunton, Mass.*
RUTH E. HEALEY (CFA'48) *San Marcos, Tex.*
MARILYN (FENTON) HICKS MCGOVERN (CAS'48, CAMED'52) *Ross, Calif.*
HERBERT FRIEDMAN (COM'49) *Delray Beach, Fla.*
SALLY S. GARNER (WHEELOCK'49) *Hayesville, N.C.*
JAMES M. GREER (QUESTROM'49) *Exeter, N.H.*
ANNE T. HALL (WHEELOCK'49) *Eastham, Mass.*

1950s

JOHN L. MOORE (DGE'50, COM'52) *Ocean Park, Maine*
LAWRENCE A. MURPHY (COM'50, GRS'51) *Brockton, Mass.*
SANDOR H. WAX (GRS'50) *Boca Raton, Fla.*
JAY L. FIALKOW (LAW'51) *Dedham, Mass.*
HENRY R. HOBLIN (CAS'51) *Romeoville, Ill.*
TERESA F. SLATER (CFA'51) *Spokane, Wash.*
DAVID L. LEWIS (COM'52) *Ann Arbor, Mich.*
ELAINE M. MAHONEY (PAL'52) *Beverly, Mass.*
ZALMAN D. NEWMAN (LAW'53) *Chandler, Ariz.*
WILLIAM J. BENGTON (QUESTROM'54) *Denton, Tex.*
GEORGE D. MALKASIAN, JR. (CAMED'54) *Rochester, Minn.*
JEANNE M. MANNING (SSW'54) *Westwood, Mass.*
DEMETRIOS T. PETRIDES (QUESTROM'54) *Dewey Beach, Del.*

DOROFEI KLIMSHUK (ENG'55) *South Orleans, Mass.*
HARLAND J. WEST (STH'55,'55) *Fredonia, N.Y.*
JOHN W. DEVOLVE (ENG'56) *Cincinnati, Ohio*
BEVERLY H. RICHTER (WHEELOCK'56,'59) *Gray, Maine*
JOHN W. BRINTON (CAS'57) *Centereach, N.Y.*
RICHARD D. CAMPBELL (CGS'55, COM'57) *Malvern, Pa.*
CHERRY B. SILVER (GRS'57) *Holladay, Utah*
MILTON S. DAVIS (CAS'58) *Lincoln, Mass.*
JANINE T. MYERS (QUESTROM'58) *Kennebunk, Maine*
HARRIET W. COUPAL (CFA'59) *Gilmanston, N.H.*
GAIL W. KRASNOW (SON'59) *Hallandale Beach, Fla.*

1960s

KENNETH A. BOYLE (STH'60) *Hopkinton, N.H.*
DAVID B. KELLEY (CAMED'60) *Redmond, Wash.*
JUDITH W. MISKELL (SARGENT'60) *Athens, Greece*
RICHARD K. KIELY (CAS'61) *Oviedo, Fla.*
NANCY K. LEFEVRE (WHEELOCK'61) *Wilmington, Del.*
GRACE LOVE (WHEELOCK'61) *Houston, Tex.*
JOHN R. D. MCCLINTOCK (LAW'62) *North Andover, Mass.*
HELENE D. WAGNER (CGS'62) *Temecula, Calif.*
DONALD J. LAMBRO (CGS'61, COM'63) *Fairfax Station, Va.*
PETER W. WIELHOUWER (ENG'63) *Kalamazoo, Mich.*
WILLIAM BURDICK (STH'64) *Pittsburgh, Pa.*
ELIZABETH J. DEES (CFA'64) *Portsmouth, R.I.*
PAULINE H. MOORE (CAS'64) *Chassell, Mich.*
JOYCE C. CIRRITO (SON'65) *Liverpool, N.Y.*
RICHARD A. VICKERY, JR. (STH'65,'72) *Evergreen, Colo.*
ARTHUR WILLIS (COM'65) *East Providence, R.I.*

MYRNA SCHNEIDERMAN SOLOD (CAS'66) *Quincy, Mass.*
GENEVIEVE A. (DOONAN) TYRELL (SON'66) *Winthrop, Mass.*
DAVID A. BAILEN (CAMED'67) *Dedham, Mass.*
ANNA N. CARLSON (CFA'67) *Loudon, N.H.*
CHERYL HARMS HAUSER (WHEELOCK'68) *Hopkins, Minn.*
BRUCE A. G. RIDDINGTON (COM'68) *Victoria, British Columbia, Canada*
CHARLES B. WHITE (GRS'68,'74) *Biddeford, Maine*
CHARLES H. LYNCH (ENG'69) *Stuart, Fla.*
JOANN STURZL (SON'69) *Aberdeen, S.D.*
SUSAN L. WALDSTEIN (DGE'69, WHEELOCK'71) *Ashland, Mass.*

1970s

RITA C. FARNHAM (SON'70) *Scottsdale, Ariz.*
CAROLYN WELCH (SSW'70) *Brunswick, Maine*
DEBORAH L. HIGH (SARGENT'71) *Fairview, Tenn.*
SUSAN J. ABELSON (WHEELOCK'72) *Mashpee, Mass.*
MARK J. GOSCIMINSKI (CFA'72) *South Easton, Mass., and Islamorada, Fla.*
PAUL E. MUEHRING (COM'72) *Ankeny, Iowa*
NANCY JUDKINS BAYLESS (CAS'73) *Atlanta, Ga.*
HARVEY F. STRAUSS (LAW'73) *Maple Glen, Pa.*
J. WALKER EPPS (STH'74) *Headland, Ala.*
STEVEN L. BERK (CAMED'75) *Lubbock, Tex.*
TERRENCE W. HAYES (SDM'75,'75) *Naples, Fla.*
RUTH L. HALL (GRS'76,'79) *Media, Pa.*
ABRAM E. KATZ (COM'76) *New Haven, Conn.*
THELMA R. YANCO (MET'76, SSW'77) *Boca Raton, Fla.*
MICHELLE MINDLIN (CFA'77) *West Hollywood, Calif.*
JAMES B. YOUNG (WHEELOCK'77) *Fairfax, Va.*
JANICE M. LUFKIN (SON'78) *Abington, Pa.*
JOHN C. NEEDHAM (LAW'78) *Scarsdale, N.Y.*
NONNIE L. HAMOVITCH (WHEELOCK'79) *Brookline, Mass.*

1980s

SADAKO S. HOLMES (SPH'80) *Bourne, Mass.*
BARBARA J. MAHLER (CFA'81) *Austin, Tex.*
MELANIE SABO (ENG'81) *King of Prussia, Pa.*
THOMAS C. HILL, III (STH'82) *Los Angeles, Calif.*
SHABBIR T. ADENWALLA (SDM'83) *Westlake, Ohio*
KIRK R. COUCH (CAS'84,'86) *Rochester, N.Y.*
KRISTINE M. CLARKE (CFA'85,'88) *Victoria, British Columbia, Canada*
JOHN J. MCLOUGHLIN (LAW'85) *Toms River, N.J.*
JUDITH A. TAYLOR (SARGENT'86,'89) *Bountiful, Utah*
ALAN D. REED (MET'87) *Dumfries, Va.*
DEIRDRE G. (GAVIN) HAGER (SPH'88, SSW'88) *Winchester, Mass.*
PHYLLIS A. EDWARDS WALTON (WHEELOCK'89) *Monroe, N.C.*
CHARLES L. ZANGAS (MET'89) *San Diego, Calif.*

1990s

DAWN GOLDING (SARGENT'90) *Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.*
CAROL LANE (SSW'90) *Kennebunk, Maine*
DONALD G. PAGE (QUESTROM'90) *Lake Oswego, Ore.*
JOHN P. O'NEILL (QUESTROM'91) *Palm City, Fla.*
MARINA BALKAS (WHEELOCK'92) *Dracut, Mass.*
SAMANTHA SHEA ALMY (QUESTROM'93) *Naples, Fla.*
SCOTT A. FOX (LAW'94) *West Falmouth, Mass.*
RENE HERNANDEZ (CAS'94) *Baldwin Park, Calif.*
ROSS K. CLAY (LAW'97) *Three Rivers, Mich.*
KATHLEEN A. VAN DEMARK (SPH'97) *Rockport, Mass.*
JOHN P. ROGERS (MET'99) *Merrimack, N.H.*

2000s

IRA P. DOMNITZ (LAW'00) *Houston, Tex.*
BRADLEY S. DEAN (QUESTROM'02) *Cohasset, Mass.*
S. CHRISTOPHER SZCZERBAN (CAS'03, QUESTROM'03) *New York, N.Y.*
LAURA M. LAMORE (CFA'07,'12,'23) *Dracut, Mass.*
ELHANNAN L. KELLER (CFA'08) *Lancaster, Pa.*

2010s

JOHN S. BURKE (ENG'11,'17) *Norwood, Mass.*
LOUIS HICKS (MET'12) *Belmont, Mass.*
KAREN TROIANO (MET'14) *North Reading, Mass.*

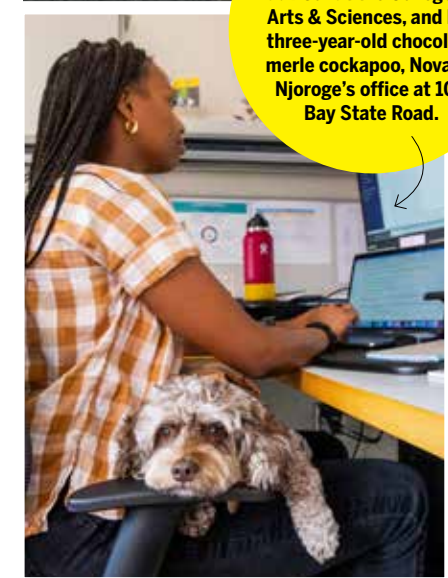
one more thing.

Chelsea Houlihan (Wheelock'22), master's program administrator at the College of Arts & Sciences computer science department, with her three-year-old rescue mix, Astro, taking a walk along Granby Street.



Chris Kolovos, BU Academy head of school, with his nine-year-old rescue lab mix, Circe.

Michelle Njoroge (CAS'20), academic advisor at the College of Arts & Sciences, and her three-year-old chocolate merle cockapoo, Nova, in Njoroge's office at 100 Bay State Road.



RUFF DAY AT THE OFFICE

► BU staff and the furry friends who occasionally join them at work

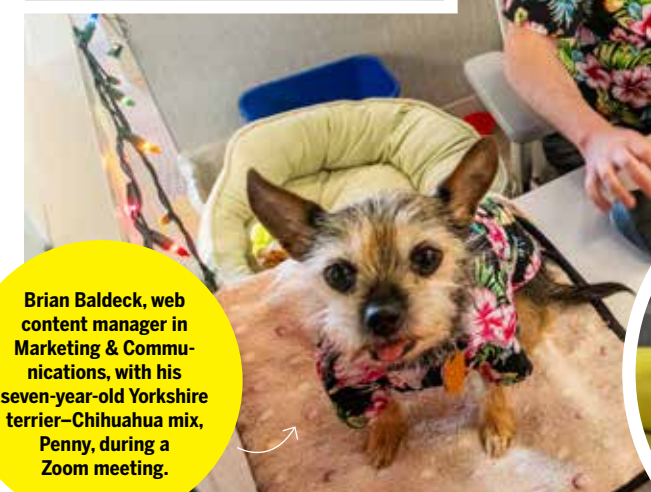
PHOTOS BY CYDNEY SCOTT

BU PHOTOGRAPHER Cydney Scott recently traversed the Charles River Campus to capture some pet-owning staff members and their *impawssibly* cute four-legged friends. The furry companions make occasional office visits—typically during summer months and other quiet times—to the delight of colleagues who welcome the sight of a wet nose and wagging tail. 🐾

Colleen Gilman Kenney, senior academic advisor at the Faculty of Computing & Data Sciences, with her five-month-old silver snow Bengal cat, G'raha.



Brian Baldeck, web content manager in Marketing & Communications, with his seven-year-old Yorkshire terrier-Chihuahua mix, Penny, during a Zoom meeting.



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