



# Skylight

News and Notes from the GTU

Spring 2018

## CJS at 50

Marking Fifty Years of Innovative Scholarship  
with the Center for Jewish Studies



### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Celebrating President  
Riess Potterveld  
Page 12

Alumna of the Year  
Virginia Burrus  
Page 14

Can Pedagogy and Religion  
Address Climate Change?  
Page 16

News and Notes from the GTU • Spring 2018



# Skylight

## COVER: CJS@50

### 4 *Looking Ahead to New Community, New Partnerships, and New Understandings of What Jewish Means*

by Deena Aranoff

### 6 *Remembering Our Beginnings and Becomings*

by Naomi Seidman

### 9 *A Place to Discover Your Voice*

by Glennis Lamm

## FEATURES

### 8 *Taube Gift Expands Conference and Learning Possibilities*

### 11 *Naomi Seidman Wins Inaugural Borsch-Rast Book Prize*

### 12 *For Such a Time as This*

by Arthur Holder

### 14 *Ancient Texts, Fresh Insights*

by Doug Davidson

### 16 *Teaching and Religion: Keys to an Equitable and Ecological Future*

by Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

### 22 *GTU Celebrates Women's Voices*

## DEPARTMENTS

### 3 *From the President*

### 20 *Art @ the GTU*

### 23 *Alumni News and Notes*

On the Cover: Photos of people and events from the GTU's Center for Jewish Studies over the past fifty years. Background image of Ancient Stone Menorah by asafta.

**President:** Riess Potterveld

**Dean & Vice President for Academic Affairs:**  
Uriah Y. Kim

**Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs:** Kathleen Kook

**Chief Operating Officer:** Jeff Pace

**Chief Financial Officer:** Ellen Peterson

**Library Director:** Clay-Edward Dixon

**Skylight Editor:** Doug Davidson

**Designer:** Ellen Moore Osborne

We welcome your feedback.

Please send comments, suggestions, alum updates, or address changes to [communications@gtu.edu](mailto:communications@gtu.edu).

## Graduate Theological Union

2400 Ridge Road  
Berkeley, CA 94709  
510-649-2400  
[www.gtu.edu](http://www.gtu.edu)

## Member Schools

American Baptist Seminary of the West  
Church Divinity School of the Pacific  
Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology  
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University  
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary of California  
Lutheran University  
Pacific School of Religion  
San Francisco Theological Seminary  
Starr King School for the Ministry

## GTU Centers and Affiliates

Asia Project  
Black Church/Africana Religious Studies  
Center for the Arts & Religion  
Center for Islamic Studies  
\*Center for Swedenborgian Studies  
Francisco J. Ayala Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences  
\*Institute of Buddhist Studies  
Mira and Ajay Shingal Center for Dharma Studies  
\*New College Berkeley  
\*Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute  
Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies  
\*School of Applied Theology  
Sikh Studies Initiative  
Women's Studies in Religion

\*GTU Affiliates

Skylight is printed on recycled and recyclable paper using soy ink.



## From the President

**A** FEW WEEKS AGO, STEPHEN Swartzman, CEO and Chairman of the Blackstone Group (the largest alternative investment firm in the world, valued at \$43.9B), suggested that corporations need to focus more deeply on the social value they are creating. His argument was that maximizing profit and increasing shareholder value can no longer be the sole goals by which value and success are measured in business enterprises.

The sentiment struck me as somewhat parallel to the significant changes taking place in the academic environment in the United States. Today, even a “liberal arts” education is expected to demonstrate deep connections to the practical realm and real-life issues facing our world. As someone who closely monitors higher education, I have been astounded by the number of college and university magazines that focus on students and faculty working on solutions to perplexing problems.

Today, education is expected to demonstrate identifiable impact—and that seems even more essential for a school like the GTU. For our work to have enduring value, our study of the world’s religious traditions here must make a positive contribution to justice and the healing of our planet.

In the past year, we’ve developed a new tagline to help articulate the essence of the GTU. It articulates what we seek to do in three brief foundational statements:

**Grow in knowledge.** This is, of course, one traditional and enduring purpose of education—critical and creative intellectual inquiry.

**Thrive in spirit.** This identifies the GTU as a school that not only embraces religious and spiritual issues, but invites personal engagement with both tradition and practice.

**Unite in solutions.** This emphasize the GTU community as one that comes together to bring critical



thinking about religion to bear on the challenges society must resolve.

This articulation represents important aspects of the GTU’s graduate education that have long been present yet continue to emerge. We see them today, for example, in the student research cohorts program, in the growing interest in public theology, and in the pursuit of relationships between faith and public life. The same emphasis was certainly incorporated into the multi-day conference on sustainability sponsored by the Center for Dharma Studies last spring as well as the current “Religion and Resistance” exhibition at the Doug Adams Gallery.

You’ll find additional evidence of this commitment throughout

this issue. It includes an article adapted from Cynthia Moe-Lobeda’s “excellence in teaching” lecture on pedagogy and the role of religion in an era of climate change. You’ll also find several pieces celebrating the 50th anniversary of our Center for Jewish Studies, which for the past decade has partnered with our Center for Islamic Studies for Madrasa-Midrasha programs that explore issues that often generate tension, misunderstanding, or conflict. These educational events create safe and respectful communities where people learn about and appreciate difference and context.

It has been an uplifting experience to serve as GTU president for the past five years and to help develop the human and financial resources to support the aspirations and dreams of our faculty and students. It is now time to pass leadership of this vital interreligious educational community to another. I do so with gratitude and with my prayerful hope that the GTU will continue to contribute creative solutions to the challenges of tomorrow.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Russ Patterson".

# The Center for Jewish Studies at 50:

## Looking Ahead to New Community, New Partnerships, and New Understandings of What Jewish Means

by Deena Aranoff

SOMETHING MAGICAL HAPPENS AT THE GTU'S RICHARD S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies: a kind of intellectual alchemy in which classical Jewish sources meet contemporary perspectives, producing new articulations of ancient themes. The intellectual buzz at CJS reverberates beyond the walls of the GTU, reaching Jewish and non-Jewish communities across the Bay Area and beyond. Through in-depth cultural, historical, textual, linguistic, and literary explorations, CJS transforms those who participate in its degree and public programs into a new kind of Jewish community.

At the heart of the CJS community are its students. For students in our Master of Arts program (as well as doctoral students with concentrations in fields related to Jewish studies), the transformation includes two years of course work devoted to the study of Jewish languages, cultures, and literatures. As the culmination of their studies, CJS MA graduates produce a thesis that examines a particular aspect of Jewish civilization. Some highlights of recent work by CJS students include a look at the earth-based character of early Judaism, an archeological study of a first-century synagogue, and examinations of Holocaust education in contemporary Germany and the use of poetry in hospice care, to name just a few. The breadth of student interests and the quality of their work is a hallmark of the Center for Jewish Studies, and signifies the capacity of academic study to transform individuals as well as the communities to which they belong.

Throughout its fifty years, the Center for Jewish Studies has combined a commitment to academic excellence with a commitment to empowering Jewish communal leadership

and advocating for social change. This is nowhere more evident than among the first cohort of students who have come to CJS through our Jewish Community Fellowship. This new fellowship provides Jewish educators and community professionals with tuition for a single course in Jewish studies, enabling them to invigorate their teaching and community service with the wisdom of Jewish scholarship. The capstone of this annual program is a workshop taught by a master Jewish educator, which will be taught this year by Miriam Heller Stern, National Director of the School of Education of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. We are excited to convene an amazing group of local educators to explore the theme of creativity and Jewish education.

CJS has a profound impact on the Bay Area community through the steady stream of people who attend our talks and who raise awareness of our programs and resources. In recent years we have hosted a series of fascinating and fantastic public programs, such as *Fiddler at Fifty*, *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Jewish History*, *Curating Culture*, *Making Memory: On the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews*, *Captives of the Dawn: Remembering Soviet Yiddish Culture*, *Jewish Women's History Reconsidered*, and *Hasidism Re-appraised*. Our lecturers and adjuncts have included internationally known scholars from all corners of the Jewish and academic worlds, including Avivah Zornberg, Charlotte Fonrobert, Daniel Matt, Stephen Pearce, Dina Stein, John Efron, Erich Gruen, Shana Penn, Robert Alter, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Anna Shternshis, Sven-Erik

**“Jewish studies at the GTU transcends the boundaries of religion and culture, building new models of interreligious and intercultural conversation.”**

Rose, Gabriella Safran, Ofer Dines, Shmary Brownstein, Francesco Spagnolo, Bernie Steinberg, and many others. CJS is a premier platform for Jewish ideas, scholarship, and culture in the Bay Area.

Jewish studies at the GTU transcends the boundaries of religion and culture, building new models of interreligious and intercultural conversation. One of the most exciting developments in recent years is our thriving Madrasa-Midrasha program. Since its inception in 2008, the program has provided a unique forum for interreligious explorations of Judaism and Islam among GTU students and throughout the larger Bay Area. The terms *Madrasa* and *Midrasha* (Arabic-Hebrew cognates, literally meaning “a place of study/learning”) refer to the traditional pedagogical settings and educational practices for the study of the classical Islamic and Jewish sources; in our case, these closely related practices are mobilized for the purposes of contemporary Jewish-Muslim dialogue.

The Madrasa-Midrasha program explores the deep historic commonalities between Judaism and Islam that are often overshadowed by mainstream media’s focus on differences and conflicts, and covers a gap that often exists in both theological education and public discourse. This highly popular collaboration bears none of the internal conflicts that occur with many academic cross-cultural programs. In some respects, the Center for Jewish Studies and the Center for Islamic Studies have become a single community of faculty and students. The common enterprise of scholarly inquiry has opened our hearts and minds to the exploration of one another in ways that have truly transformed us.



Another very exciting current trend at CJS is our increased role in training those who intend to pursue rabbinical studies locally and nationally. Studies at CJS now serve as an important first step towards rabbinical, pastoral, and academic Jewish leadership. Since rabbinical schools often require that entering students acquire greater Hebrew fluency and textual literacy, the GTU lays the groundwork for Bay Area individuals who intend to pursue such studies down the road. The transformative potential of CJS in the process of rabbinic education can only be anticipated.

As we celebrate our fiftieth anniversary, the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at the GTU continues to prioritize the kind of academic study and critical engagement that is necessary to address the challenges of our era, and build a more just and stable society. Now more than ever, many of us are inquiring into the nature of our political culture, our social life, and our relationship to the natural world. May our studies over the next fifty years and beyond contribute to the broader human effort toward understanding and cooperation. ♦

*Deena Aranoff is director of the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies and senior lecturer in Medieval Jewish Studies at the GTU.*

# The Center for Jewish Studies at 50:

## Remembering Our Beginnings and Becomings

by Naomi Seidman



**I**N 1964, JUST TWO YEARS AFTER THE FOUNDING OF THE Graduate Theological Union as a partnership of Christian seminaries, the school's dean, John Dillenberger, approached the Conservative and Reform Movements to share his interest in establishing Jewish Studies on campus "to stand in its own right in relation to other studies, and not just as an adjunct to Protestant studies." The radical vision of the early GTU is well reflected in its desire to establish a home for Jewish studies supported rather than constrained by its Christian context. After several years of development, the GTU's Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) was launched in 1968 with the hiring of David Winston, a scholar of Philo and Jewish Hellenism who had previously taught at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles (now American Jewish University).

The following year, Professor Winston spoke with the *San Francisco Jewish Bulletin* about the importance of seminarians having "live contact with Jewish scholarship," rather than encountering Judaism solely through Christian teachers and concerns. In fact, the generative partnership between Jewish and Christian scholars was often dramatized in the classroom, in the courses Professor Winston co-taught with Dean Dillenberger and Durwood Foster, a theologian at Pacific School of Religion.

It's essential to understand these developments at the GTU within a broader context. In 1968, the year the Center for Jewish Studies was founded, Hebrew literary scholar

Arnold Band of UCLA published a report on the resurgence of interest in Jewish studies in American universities in the quarter-century following the Second World War. While most seminaries had long taught Hebrew, and older universities offered Hebrew and other Jewish-related courses in such departments as Semitics or Oriental studies, new Jewish studies programs were emerging that included a wider range of courses and faculty specializations, and that were shaped less by the interests of seminarians than by their Jewish faculty and student bodies.

**A**t the time CJS was established at the GTU, this resurgence Band spoke of was still gathering strength. In 1968, there were still only sixty full-time professors in Jewish studies in the United States; by contrast, there are now more than one hundred Jewish studies programs, generally with multiple faculty positions. Thus, the GTU was forward thinking not only in proposing to hire a Jewish studies professor but also in establishing a Center for Jewish Studies for this professor to direct. It would take until 1985 for Stanford University to appoint its first full-time professor of Jewish studies; its program for Jewish studies was formally constituted the following year. And while the University of California, Berkeley, had offered courses in Hebrew, Bible, and Semitics since the late nineteenth-century, in the 1960s it was just beginning to expand its





Naomi Seidman, David Biale, and Daniel Matt



David Winston and Daniel Matt

Jewish studies offerings to history, literature, and Near Eastern Studies. A formal program in Jewish studies at UC Berkeley, combining faculty in these different departments, was not instituted until 1995, through the founding of the Joint Doctoral Program in partnership with the GTU.

The GTU was part of a growing trend in the American university while also constituting a special case: the GTU was a union of seminaries, which had traditionally subsumed the study of Jews to Christian theological concerns; but it was a new and innovative kind of institution, as a union of seminaries that grew out of the ecumenical and interreligious ideals of post-Vatican II culture.

These conditions, already visible at the outset, shaped the development of the Center for Jewish Studies in distinctive ways. On the one hand, the commitment to academic excellence along the model of the University of California (where Professor Winston quickly forged ties) ensured that course offerings would be governed by rigorous methods; on the other hand, as part of a union of seminaries, and without formal connection to any single Jewish denomination, CJS was also shaped by experiential and community-oriented approaches to Judaism.

For much of the 1970s, CJS was staffed by visiting scholars and lecturers on the cutting edge of the emerging interdisciplinary field. In 1979, CJS hired its second full-time faculty member, Daniel Matt, a scholar of Jewish mysticism.

Matt deepened the GTU's connections with the Bay Area Jewish community, providing courses and public lectures fascinating to those interested in spiritual systems and practices of all varieties. To the academic luminaries who had taught at or visited CJS in the 1970s (some, such as Robert Alter and Jacob Milgrom, from UCB) were added such public figures and spiritual teachers as Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and David Hartman.

CJS expanded further in the early 1980s, with the hiring of a third faculty member with a specialization in art and Judaism, Jo Milgrom (herself a gifted artist). At the time, CJS was offering about a dozen courses each year in a full range of subjects. In 1982, after CJS became established in its own offices (including a dedicated seminar room and kosher kitchen), the elements were in place to begin a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies degree program. Professor Matt declared that a "renaissance of Jewish life was underway in the Bay Area." CJS was playing a crucial role in this revival, hosting not only courses but also concerts, lectures, exhibitions, and celebrations of Jewish holidays.

The mid-1980s proved a period of particularly strong growth. In 1985-1986, the Center established its first endowed chair in Jewish Studies, with leading grants from the Koret Foundation and William and Flora Hewlett (along with gifts from many other supporters). The GTU recruited



Charlotte Fonrobert and David Biale

the eminent historian David Biale of SUNY Binghamton for the Koret Chair and as director of the Center. Professor Biale sought to expand CJS academic offerings and encouraged the local Jewish community to assume “ownership” of the Center, rather than leaning so heavily on the GTU member schools for financial support. CJS found more than a few such admirers and supporters; in 1998, the Center was renamed in honor one of its oldest and most loyal friends, Richard S. Dinner, who died that year.

With his extensive list of publications and growing visibility, Professor Biale was well positioned to solidify the academic connections between CJS and other Jewish studies programs being developed at neighboring institutions, particularly at UCB. In describing the CJS mission in 1991, Biale noted that the Center undertook not only to prepare students for advanced degrees in Jewish studies and serve the larger GTU and Bay Area communities by offering programs in Jewish and interreligious subjects, but also “to work cooperatively with the programs at UCB and Stanford to create a Bay Area-wide Jewish studies community with national and international standing.”

1995 saw the fruit of some of Professor Biale’s most inspired efforts, with the launching of the Joint Doctoral Program (JDP) in Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union and the University of California, Berkeley. For the nearly two decades of its existence (it was dissolved in 2011), the JDP was among the most highly regarded Jewish studies doctoral programs in the world, attracting international applicants eager to study in a program famous both for its academic rigor and for its interest in some of the newest and most exciting methodologies and approaches

## Taube Gift Expands Conference and Learning Possibilities

**T**hanks to a generous gift from the Taube Family Fund, the GTU has established the Taube Conference Center, providing upgraded space for conferences and other events that opens the GTU’s rich educational and interreligious opportunities to the wider public. The gift also enables the GTU to expand its commitment to flexible learning environments by upgrading existing classrooms and study rooms. The improved spaces will be equipped with technology similar to that of the Collaborative Learning Space in the GTU Library, which has been in high demand since it opened in January 2017.

Both the Hedco Room at 2465 Le Conte Avenue and the Conference Room on the second floor of the library will be upgraded to provide more flexible learning spaces for smaller groups, with movable furniture, video conferencing capabilities, and touch-screen displays. The Collaborative Learning Space will be augmented with a two-camera video conferencing system. Two study rooms on the first floor of the Library will be equipped with new furniture and built-in displays. Other rooms on campus will also see upgrades in technology. Dr. Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero, director of digital learning and lecturer in theology & educational technology, is spearheading the renewal of these conference and classroom spaces.

Thank you to the Taube Family Fund for their generous gift, which will help provide state-of-the-art learning technologies and conference capabilities at the GTU. ♦





including feminism, queer studies, and postcolonialism. The JDP joined other programs at CJS as part of a distinctive learning community in which academic rigor was combined with religious celebrations, films, a literary salon, a student-run newspaper, and a wide range of cultural programming.

1995 was also the year of Professor Winston's retirement. Naomi Seidman, author of this article and a 1993 graduate of the UCB Department of Comparative Literature in Hebrew and Yiddish, was hired to replace him, and became director in 1999. By 2002, the faculty, which over this period included not only Seidman but also Rabbi Yoel Kahn, folklorist Dina Stein, and Byzantine scholar Joshua Holo, was running, or co-running four programs—the MA in Jewish Studies, the Jewish studies track in the GTU's PhD program, a one-year certificate program, and the JDP—with a total of thirty-six students enrolled (including eleven in the JDP).

The new millennium brought some changes: In 2006, Deena Aranoff, a graduate of Columbia University in Jewish history, was hired for what had become the medievalist position on the faculty. In 2007, Holger Zellentin was hired to teach rabbinics, a particular strength of the JDP, given the prominence of Daniel Boyarin at UCB. Since 2016, CJS has been under the able directorship of Professor Aranoff, whose status as a master teacher has brought CJS increasing visibility. With Professor Seidman's impending move to the University of Toronto, CJS will be recruiting new talent in the area of modern Jewish history and culture.

This recitation of faculty members and programs hardly does justice to the much larger roster of visiting scholars

## A Place to Discover Your Voice

by Glennis Lamm

Words are inadequate to express the impact that the GTU—and, more specifically, the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies—has had on my life. During my time at CJS, I have grown both as a person and as an academic. CJS is a place where one learns from others' vast academic wealth as well as from their rich personal experiences and viewpoints. I have sat at many tables (usually with some form of good food), and have listened to others present their views and interpretations on a wide array of topics. I grew so much simply from being present and engaging in these moments. I enjoyed the content of my classes immensely; however, it was the people and conversations that forever changed me.



Beyond being an endless well of valuable information, my professors at CJS cared that their transfer of their knowledge went beyond a surface level and sparked something deeper. You need only spend a few moments with Deena or Naomi to understand that they are facilitating something powerful at CJS. During my time here, the most impactful moments I had were sitting in Deena Aranoff's office, as we discussed the points—and often chaos—in my work. I still credit Deena's consistently potent questions and creative direction with actualizing my thesis. She never made me feel I was undertaking a losing battle, despite my own lingering fear that this might be the case. Instead, Deena made me feel I had a valuable voice to contribute to the larger academic community. As much of an undertaking and an accomplishment a thesis is, what I got from those moments under Deena's and Naomi's tutelage was much more valuable.

It is an incredible thing to write a thesis, but it is an even more incredible thing to believe you have something to contribute going forward. The Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies instills and nurtures that confidence in its students.

CJS is a place where people from every walk and ideology sit together at the table, both theoretically and physically, to build a community. It is a place where you will be challenged. It is a place that will change the way you see the world; things can no longer be one-dimensional, rather they are vibrantly nuanced. It is a place where you discover that you have a voice and, by extension, a place that beckons you to contribute. I'm eternally grateful that CJS is part of my life's story. ♦

*Glennis Lamm is a recent MA graduate of CJS, and currently works as a freelance writer and speaker.*

and teachers who offered courses at CJS during this period, including poet and translator Marcia Falk, scholar of Jewish spirituality Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, anthropologist of childhood Orit Yafeh, queer activist and Orthodox rabbi Steven Greenberg, the late mystic and activist Rabbi Alan Lew, filmmaker and former director of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival Peter Stein, feminist activist Rachel Biale, and historian and theorist of Jewish education Hanan Alexander. The linguist Yitzkhok Niborski, Director of the Medem Institute in Paris, twice offered Yiddish intensive seminars.

The emphasis on training students in text skills, and particularly in rabbinic sources, continued, with courses by Ishai Rosen-Zvi and by Charlotte Fonrobert (a GTU graduate and long-time Chair of Jewish Studies at Stanford). CJS also offered summer and winter intensive programs in rabbinic studies, often led by Rabbi Benay Lappe. Building on its annual “Winter Beit Midrash” (led for years

by Rabbi Lappe), CJS was instrumental in launching The Winter Madrasa/Beit Midrash in 2005, on the theme of “Gender and Sexuality in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity,” and co-taught by Dr. Ghazala Anwar, Rabbi Lappe, and Dr. Mary Ann Tolbert.

Such collaborations laid the foundations for the shared work between CJS and the GTU’s Center for Islamic Studies, founded in 2007. The Madrasa-Midrasha program, organized by the two Centers, was only the centerpiece of a full range of cosponsored courses, events, lectures, holiday celebrations, and public programs that brought together the Jewish and Muslim Bay

Area communities. In 2015 the founding of the Center for Dharma Studies enabled an even richer network of interreligious collaborations. Among the most memorable events have been programs on the environment, on sacred time, and on national and international politics.

Innovative initiatives like these owe much to the creativity and energy of our students. Beyond the quality of the work they produce (including many published theses and dissertations), student initiatives have been part of CJS and GTU from the beginning, from Holocaust Memorial services in the 1990s to the 2010 public Qur’an reading (organized by MA student Robin Braverman) in response to Islamophobic attacks. CJS graduates have gone on to teaching, community activism, rabbinical and ministerial positions, and writing careers.

To conclude on a more personal note: I have personally witnessed nearly half of CJS’s fifty years of existence (or a little more than half, if you count my years taking GTU classes as a UCB doctoral student). It is no exaggeration to say that to review this history in preparation for writing this article was also to review my life. As with everyone who has ever taught or spoken at the GTU, I feel keenly the uniqueness of this place I have been privileged to call my academic home since 1995.

Some of this uniqueness began, no doubt, at the very founding, with John Dillenberger’s insistence that Jewish Studies would be no “adjunct” but rather a full member of the consortium. Nearly three decades after making that statement, John served on the search committee that hired me and was a part of the welcome I received at the GTU

**“Without a formal connection to any single Jewish denomination, CJS has been shaped by experiential and community-oriented approaches to Judaism.”**

## The Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies

### CJS @ 50

Join the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at the GTU as we celebrate fifty years of scholarship, leadership, and public engagement. Our day-long conference will feature presentations by CJS alumni, students, and faculty, and a collaborative oral history of CJS. We will also honor those people whose vision and commitment have enabled CJS to thrive for this half-century, and we will conclude with a celebratory evening reception. Please join us!

Thursday, May 3, 2018 | 8:30am–6pm  
Dinner Board Room, GTU Library,  
2400 Ridge Rd., Berkeley

(although I was barely aware of his role in CJS's founding). But even thinking back to my first encounter with CJS, as a cross-registered student sitting around a seminar table in "the Annex" (where the Center for Islamic Studies is now housed) where Danny Matt and David Biale were co-teaching a medieval ethical text, I felt the Center's distinctiveness. It would take many more pages to put this quality in words. But I trust that even if this history has not allowed the reader to feel it, opportunities to experience this extraordinary learning community will continue to present themselves, now and for another century to come. ♦

*Naomi Seidman is Koret Professor of Jewish Culture at the Graduate Theological Union's Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies and winner of the inaugural Borsch-Rast Book Prize. In the fall she will begin a new faculty position at the University of Toronto.*

Over its fifty-year history, the GTU's Center for Jewish Studies has been upheld by the generosity of thousands of friends and donors. In particular, CJS wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the financial support of the Aaron and Marie Blackman Foundation, Joan W. and Richard S. Dinner, Patricia H. Gibbs, the Walter & Elise Haas Fund, the Crescent Porter Hale Foundation, the Hellman Foundation, Douglas Herst, William and Flora Hewlett, the Koret Foundation, Stephen Leavitt, Rachel H. Newman, the Bernard Osher Jewish Philanthropies Foundation, Miriam Roland, Tobey H. Roland, Rita R. Semel, the Swig Foundation, Tad Taube, the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture, and the Laszlo N. Tauber Family Foundation.

## Naomi Seidman Wins Inaugural Borsch-Rast Book Prize

Naomi Seidman, Koret Professor of Jewish Culture at the GTU's Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies, is the winner of the GTU's inaugural Borsch-Rast Book Prize for her book, *The Marriage Plot, Or, How Jews Fell in Love with Love, and with Literature* (Stanford University Press). The newly established Borsch-Rast Book Prize is given annually and carries a cash award of \$10,000.

The Borsch-Rast Book Prize seeks to encourage innovative and creative theological scholarship by GTU graduates and current faculty.

In announcing Seidman's receipt of the award, GTU Dean Uriah Y. Kim stated, "Naomi Seidman's *The Marriage Plot* is a worthy choice as the inaugural winner of the Borsch-Rast Prize, which is among the most generous book awards in the field of religion and theology. Dr. Seidman has set a very high bar for future winners to meet."

Members of the selection committee heralded Seidman's work for its profound exploration of Jewish cultural attitudes toward love, sex, and marriage. Margaret Miles, professor emerita of historical theology and former academic dean of the GTU declared: "*The Marriage Plot* demonstrates a complex connection between literature and romantic practices in nineteenth century European Jewish communities. But Seidman's thoughtful and intriguing revisions of such common assumptions



Naomi Seidman and Uriah Kim

as secularism, assimilation, and modernity extend far beyond her strong contribution to Jewish Studies. Readers are sure to be engaged, challenged, and persuaded to rethink our understanding of all sex-gender systems and how they circulate both in literary form and in the erotic choices we make."

Kathryn Barush, assistant professor of art history and religion at the Jesuit School of Theology-Santa Clara University and the Graduate Theological Union, was awarded an honorable mention for her book, *Art and the Sacred Journey in Britain, 1790-1850* (Routledge).

As this issue of *Skylight* went to press, the GTU was preparing to host the First Annual Borsch-Rast Book Lecture, featuring Daniel Boyarin, Judith Butler, and Naomi Seidman sharing perspectives on Seidman's award-winning book. Video of the event (held on March 22 at 6:30 pm in the chapel at Pacific School of Religion) will be available via the GTU website at [www.gtu.edu/borsch-rast-lecture-2018](http://www.gtu.edu/borsch-rast-lecture-2018). ♦



# For Such a Time As This

With a steady hand and a clear vision, President Riess Potterveld has guided the GTU through five years of growth and transition.

by Arthur Holder

WHEN RIESS POTTERVELD BECAME ACTING PRESIDENT of the Graduate Theological Union in 2013, the public announcement said he would provide “stable leadership” while the Board of Trustees made plans to fill the position on a permanent basis. It is easy to see why he was chosen for that transitional role. This was to be his third presidency, coming after eight years at Lancaster Theological Seminary and three years at Pacific School of Religion, where some years before he had served as vice president for institutional advancement and acting dean. Clearly Riess was someone who knew the ropes in the administration of theological education!

Just as importantly, Riess knew the GTU. Through his two stints at PSR, he had already gained the confidence of GTU board members, including the presidents of the member schools. Here was someone who could be trusted to hold things steady while the institution figured out what to do next.

But it didn’t turn out that way at all. Just a year later, in 2014, the Board of Trustees elected Riess as president, to universal acclaim. The various constituencies of the community on Holy Hill had quickly decided that Riess’s vision of an expanded and energetically interreligious school was the way forward for the GTU. Throughout his five years at the helm of the institution, Riess has dedicated himself heart and soul to making that vision a reality. Some of the most obvious signs of the implementation of that vision are

the recently revised curriculum for MA and PhD students and a new look for GTU communications, including a new logo and tagline, a completely renovated website, and *Sky-light* magazine.

While Riess likes to talk about the need to bring more religious traditions to the table in graduate education, he is also quick to remind people that interreligious cooperation has long been central to the GTU’s core mission. The Center for Jewish Studies was established at the GTU in 1968, just six years after the school was founded. The Institute of Buddhist Studies became a GTU affiliate in 1985; the Center for Islamic Studies opened in 2007. The interreligious trajectory is clear, Riess has said. But can’t we pick up the pace?

Just two years into Riess’s tenure, the Center for Dharma Studies opened to promote the study of Hinduism, Jainism, and other Dharma traditions. Funding from local donors now supports courses in Sikh Studies and Mormon Studies. The Center for Swedenborgian Studies became a GTU affiliate in 2016.

The interreligious breadth of the GTU has expanded in additional ways during Riess’s presidency. Acquisition of the Lanier Graham “Art of the World Religions” collection has brought more than three hundred works of sacred art to the GTU where they can be displayed in the library and eventually online in a digital museum. Active conversations are underway with the Institute of Buddhist Studies and Zaytuna College (the first Muslim liberal arts college in the



Reiss Potterveld congratulates a graduate at GTU commencement.

U. S.) about the possibility that these recently accredited schools may become member schools of the GTU.

Riess has also fostered the GTU's support for interdisciplinary scholarship. Thanks in large part to his hard work, both the Center for the Arts & Religion (CARE) and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS) have moved from affiliate status to become fully integrated GTU programs. The faculty and staff associated with these two centers are now key partners in the school's pursuit of its educational mission.

All of this institutional expansion and new programming costs money. With his extensive experience in fundraising, Riess has worked to grow the GTU's endowment from \$31 million in 2013 to over \$51 million today, with as much as another \$20 million currently in development. Under his leadership, the GTU secured the three largest single gifts in its history: \$4.4 million from Mira and Ajay Shingal to establish the Center for Dharma Studies that has been named for them, \$2 million from Francisco J. Ayala for the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences that now

bears his name, and \$5.7 million for student scholarships from the estate of long-time GTU supporters Robert and Kathryn Riddell.

Although Riess will be the first to say that many other people have contributed to every institutional success, his leadership has been essential. Whether meeting with a potential donor, brainstorming with students and faculty, or developing strategic directions with the board, Riess has that rare combination of gifts that allows him to be both a receptive listener and a creative originator of ideas. He is always eager to get started, but infinitely patient with the sustained efforts necessary to produce results.

Presidents of educational institutions are often called upon to offer a brief word at events like student orientation sessions, commencements, public lectures, conferences, and symposia. Those who have watched Riess in action on such occasions have come to appreciate him as a master of the art. In his customary low-key and unassuming manner, Riess will tell about something he saw or heard recently—an art exhibition, a conversation with a student or donor, a news item about the latest innovation in technology, or an

incident with one of his beloved grandchildren. Then he will make a connection to activities at the GTU by reporting on an endowment gift or a programmatic initiative that is building steam. Good things are happening here, Riess tells the audience, and the GTU is making a positive difference in the world. His hopeful enthusiasm makes you want to be part of the action.

In many ways Riess's accomplishments as president of the GTU reflect the principles of process theology, which was the subject of his doctoral dissertation: an emphasis on becoming over stasis, a belief in the benefits of pluralism and diversity, and a conviction that divine reality is always at work in the depth of human experience for the ultimate triumph of beauty and goodness. The Graduate Theological Union is fortunate to have had such a leader for such a time as this! ♦

*Arthur Holder is professor of Christian Spirituality at the GTU and served as the school's dean and vice president for academic affairs from 2002 to 2016.*

Please join the GTU Board of Trustees in honoring the remarkable legacy of Dr. Riess Potterveld by contributing to the

### **Potterveld Fund for Interreligious Education and Scholarship**

Under the leadership of President Potterveld, who will retire on June 30, 2018, the Graduate Theological Union has become one of the premier institutions for interreligious theological education in North America. While the GTU has long been an innovative center for ecumenical and interfaith scholarship, the blossoming of the GTU as a hub of innovative interreligious dialogue and education during Dr. Potterveld's presidency has been extraordinary.

Please help the GTU celebrate Riess Potterveld's legacy and build on the foundation established under his leadership by making a gift to the Potterveld Fund for Interreligious Education and Scholarship.

Donate now at [www.gtu.edu/potterveldfund](http://www.gtu.edu/potterveldfund).

Thank You for Joining Us!

For more about President Riess Potterveld's accomplishments, public events related to his retirement, and the Potterveld Fund for Interreligious Education and Scholarship, visit [www.gtu.edu/potterveld-retirement](http://www.gtu.edu/potterveld-retirement).

# Ancient Texts, Fresh Insights

## Alumna of the Year Virginia Burrus brings the wisdom of the past to bear on today's challenges

When Dr. Virginia Burrus (MA, '84; PhD, '91) was a GTU student, she sought to help the school find ways to celebrate its unique nature as a hub of religious pluralism and scholarship. Along with other doctoral students, she advocated for the first GTU commencement ceremony. (Previously GTU graduates were recognized only at the commencements of member schools with which they affiliated.) She also encouraged the GTU to begin publicly honoring the good work its graduates were doing, which led to Dr. Margaret Miles being named the GTU's first alumna of the year in 1991.

Virginia Burrus never imagined she would accept the award she helped establish. "I never dreamed I'd be honored in this way," she reflected at the GTU alumni reception at the AAR-SBL Annual Meetings in November. "All kinds of things have come to pass that I couldn't have envisioned twenty-six years ago, including wonderful surprises like being named alumna of the year. So I am very grateful indeed."

Today, Virginia Burrus is the Bishop W. Earl Ledden Professor of Religion and director of graduate studies at Syracuse University in New York. She came to Syracuse in 2013, after more than two decades on the faculty at Drew University.

Throughout her scholarly career, Burrus has explored how ancient traditions speak to contemporary issues. "I've always tried to ask what these old texts might have to say to me, and to whatever concerns I bring to them. I try to hear new things. I'm not coming to the texts expecting to hear only patriarchy or dominion language, even though I take these critiques





Virginia Burrus in Petra, Jordan

very seriously. But I'm not interested in apologetic work or defending the tradition either. So I don't tend to be primarily in a critical or defensive stance, but instead try to listen for new or unexpected voices."

Over her career as a scholar, Dr. Burrus has pursued this approach through a range of concerns. "Initially, my work was focused on women's histories. Then I became interested in gender more generally, particularly in the novel ways masculinity was being reconceived in ancient Christian sources. How did we come to think of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and what's going on in that distinctively masculine kind of theological formulation?"

Issues of sexuality and eroticism are primary in several of her books, including *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (2008), as well as *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (2004). In her upcoming book, *Ancient Ecopoetics*, Burrus has shifted her attention to ecological thinking. She describes the book as an "attempt to discover in early Christian texts and artifacts resources for thinking better ecologically."

The move to Syracuse has given Burrus the opportunity to teach undergraduates for the first time. "It's a big switch after two decades at Drew teaching either theological school students or PhD students," she notes. "So many of my undergraduate students are struggling with messages they've gotten from the church that they find troubling in a wide range of ways." The importance of this work has been highlighted in the current political context. "I was teaching a course on Christianity and Sexuality to undergraduates in the midst of the Trump election. With

so much at stake for gender and sexual minorities, it's not difficult to persuade them of the relevance of the material."

Syracuse has also offered Burrus opportunities to move beyond her primary expertise in Christianity. She's now teaching courses in Greek and Roman religions, material she studied as an undergrad.

Reflecting on her GTU experiences, Burrus recalls the GTU's Center for Women and Religion as being critical. "CWR held meetings where graduate students would listen to one another's work and encourage each other. It was the early days for feminist scholarship in religion, so having that center to highlight and support the significance of that work was crucial for me."

During her doctoral work, Virginia had opportunity to be mentored by women scholars across the consortium, including her doctoral advisor Rebecca Lyman (CDSP), as well as Anne Wire (SFTS), Marty Storz (PLTS), and Mary Ann Donovan (JST). "A big part of my sense of the GTU involves being educated by a wonderful group of women scholars," she recalls. "So moving into the world as an academic, it has always seemed perfectly natural to be in places where women are playing strong roles."

Burrus celebrates the scholarly freedom she and other students were offered: "The GTU really empowered us to do the work each of us wanted to do. I'm quite sure I would be a very different teacher and thinker had I not had the particular graduate education I had. The GTU not only allowed me, or even just encouraged me, but *forced* me to find my own path and to discover my own vision and voice. That's something I have never stopped doing, and I'm so grateful."

*Doug Davidson is director of communications at the GTU.*

# Teaching and Religion: Keys to an Equitable and Ecological Future

How can we transform our pedagogies and draw on religious wisdom to respond to the perils of climate change and climate colonialism?

by Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

**W**E LIVE AT AN UNPRECEDENTED TURNING POINT IN history. In light of climate change, humankind hovers on a precipice. On one side is our current path, leading toward almost unimaginable catastrophe in which those least responsible for climate change are most affected by its deadly consequences, and in which the gap between those who have too much and those with not enough continues to widen.

On the other side, however, is the potential before us. It is a world in which all people have the necessities for life with dignity, and Earth's ecosystems flourish. Never before has humankind faced the epic choice that we now face.

Where something great is required of humankind, something great is required of its religious traditions. A basic role of religion in the early twenty-first century is to plumb the depths of our traditions for moral-spiritual power to forge a sustainable relationship between humankind and our planetary home. In this historic crucible, religious leaders and educators have a crucial role. The first essential step is to see what is really going on—in particular those realities that, for many of us, are often hidden by blinders of privilege, in this case climate privilege.

Seeing cruel realities in which we are implicated requires courage. Seeing in ways that build moral power rather than despair or powerlessness requires wisdom. Courage and wisdom begin with facing truth: The human species—or rather the high consuming among us—has, through climate change, become a threat to life on Earth. The credible scientific community is of one accord about this reality.

Less widely accepted, however, is a corollary point of

soul-searing moral import. It is this: In general, the people most devastated by climate change are *not* causing it. The race and class dimensions of this injustice are stark. While caused primarily by high-consuming people, climate change is wreaking death and destruction first and foremost on impoverished people who also are disproportionately people of color. The island nations that will be rendered unlivable by rising seas, subsistence farmers whose crops are lost to climate change, and many coastal people without resources to protect against and recover from the fury of climate-related weather disaster are not the people largely responsible for greenhouse gas emissions. Nor are they, for the most part, white.

**S**ome time ago, I was invited to India to work with seminary leaders on matters of eco-justice. They gently encouraged me to re-see climate change as climate colonialism. “Climate change,” declared one high level Indian religious leader, “is caused by the colonization of the atmospheric commons by the powerful nations and the powerful within [them]...However, communities with almost zero footprint bear the brunt of the consequences.” *Climate colonialism* and *climate debt* are terms arising from the Global South to describe this injustice.

The World Bank warns that drought-affected areas will increase to nearly half of global cropland by 2100, with sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia hit hardest. Let it sink in: With drought, in food-vulnerable areas, death stalks.

Rising seas could threaten more than 25 percent of Africa's people and drown some island states and low-lying

**"We must acknowledge the gravity of the situation while embodying hope that we can affect change."**

coastal areas. This means hundreds of millions of climate refugees. No less alarming: Desertification, which will strike hard in the Arab world and southern Africa, provokes war. It was a factor in the Darfur conflict. The U.S. Department of Defense identifies climate change as a foremost security threat to the United States.

The impact of climate change damage on the world's *already vulnerable* people is stunning. Yet the cause of this disaster is the uncontrolled release of greenhouse gasses, especially by high-consuming societies like ours. Courageous seeing reveals the unbearable: Just by housing, feeding, clothing, and transporting ourselves, we are killing. By doing nothing or little, we actively bring on the catastrophe.

This brutality is intricately intertwined with even the most beautiful moments of our lives. The beauty of my flying to see my new grandbaby spews forth tons of carbon dioxide. The work we do here at the GTU is beautiful, yet so many of the tools we use daily—the computers, our clothing, the roof over our heads—are linked to petroleum and, as such, contribute to climate change.

In short, the current human population faces dangers unknown to all who came before us. But that is only half the story. For our time is also magnificently ripe with potential for dramatic social change toward a world of ecological sanity and social equity. This will require radical change in how we live at all levels of social organization: household, the corporate world, institutions of civil society, government.



Such change will entail profound shifts in how we teach and learn, as well as how we draw on the wisdom of our religious traditions—and that speaks directly to our work here at the GTU. I would argue that in the crucible of climate colonialism: 1) how we teach and learn matters tremendously; and 2) the world's religions have a role to play that is of life and death import.

### **Teaching toward Climate Justice**

As we consider teaching in light of the urgent demands of climate change and climate injustice, we face a paradox. On the one hand, a large sector of U.S. society does not “get it.” Many people fail to realize fully the magnitude of the climate disaster; the dynamics of race, class, gender, and global North privilege determining who will suffer and die; the mortal danger that the corporate- and finance-driven global economy presents to the atmosphere; and the physical impossibility of this global economy as we know it continuing. Those who fail to recognize these factors will do little to address them.

On the other hand, when we begin to “get it,” when denial or ignorance is overcome and awareness dawns, a disabling rage or a foreboding sense of doom, powerlessness, or “too lateness” may set in, threatening to overpower any sense that we can make a difference. In short:



the more one sees, the more powerless one may feel. The knowledge necessary for moral acting also impedes it.

Therefore, we as educators must learn to teach climate change and climate justice in ways that instill moral agency. Doing so presents at least three formidable pedagogical challenges. The first is enabling students to uncover the social justice consequences of climate change and of measures to address it. As noted above, the people most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change are—in general—not those most responsible for it and are overwhelmingly people of color and economically impoverished people. Yet climate-privileged societies and sectors may respond to climate change with policies and practices that protect them provisionally while relegating others to death or devastation. In fact, some measures to reduce carbon emissions designed by privileged sectors may further endanger climate vulnerable sectors.

A second pedagogical challenge is enabling students to uncover and address the root causes of climate change and climate injustice rather than just ameliorating the problem by lowering carbon footprints, crucial as that move is. This means, for example, drawing the complex links between climate change and unconscious assumptions of white superiority. If—to illustrate—the people displaced and dying from climate change were primarily wealthy white U.S. citizens, this country would not be impeding global efforts to lower greenhouse gas emissions and would not be continuing to extract fossil fuels with rash abandon. In addition, exposing root causes entails drawing the connections between climate change and advanced global capitalism. Earth as a bio-physical system cannot continue to operate according to the defining features of deregulated corporate- and finance-driven capitalism. That is not an ideological or political opinion; it is a physical reality.

The third pedagogical challenge is enabling students to develop hope-filled moral agency even while recognizing the magnitude and complexity of the crisis. I cannot overstate the crucial nature of both; we must acknowledge the gravity of the situation while embodying the hope that we can affect change. The survival of civilization in a relatively humane form may depend upon it.

What are keys to teaching in this way? What pedagogies will generate the moral agency for a dramatic and rapid reversal, a turn to ways of living that Earth can sustain and that breed economic, racial, and environmental equity? What and how do we and our students need to learn?

Answering such questions in any comprehensive manner is beyond the scope of this article. But let me offer some preliminary suggestions.

Someone once said we need to know three things:

- ❖ We are not bad.
- ❖ We are not alone.
- ❖ There is a way out.

Having pondered this wisdom in light of pedagogy, I propose that in designing transformative teaching related to climate change in disciplines of theological and religious studies, we draw upon:

- ❖ *The power of practice*: Both moral agency and inertia are bred by practicing them. Taking steps toward a more equitable and ecological future helps build the courage to take further steps.
- ❖ *The power of community*: Working in close relationship with trusted people, or people whom one senses will become trusted, breeds moral power.
- ❖ *The power of the unconscious*: Studies indicate that human actions are determined more by unconscious assumptions than by conscious decisions. We must re-calibrate teaching to address both the intellect and the unconscious mind.
- ❖ *The power of self-image*: People act and decide according to what coheres with self-image. Teaching must cultivate a sense of selfhood that perceives self as agent of climate justice.
- ❖ *The power of intersectional analysis*: Theoretical frameworks that link race, class, gender, and Earth help demystify the unruly and daunting complexity of climate injustice.

These are but pointers to daring pedagogy for a viable future if this dangerous species is to forge one. We who teach and learn at the GTU are blessed with the intellectual, interreligious, and moral community to collaboratively craft such pedagogical innovation. We must do so. The stakes are high—life and death.

### Religion as Crucial Player

This turning point in history calls to the fore the gifts and capacities of the world's religious traditions. Therefore, the GTU—as a school educating future educators, scholars, clergy, and community leaders with powerful training in the world of theological and religious studies—is a crucial player.

If religion is to take its place in the great pan-human

**"The current generation faces perils unknown to all who came before us. But that is only half the story. For our time is also magnificently ripe with potential for dramatic social change toward a world of ecological sanity and social equity."**



task of forging a sustainable relationship between the human species and our planetary home, it cannot do so in the vestiges of what it has been. The challenges of climate change and climate injustice demand will what Larry Rasmussen has called religion "in a new key."

**W**hat does religion for ecological and equitable human life on Earth look like?

If it is to meet the challenges of this time, religion will:

- ❖ *Deprivatize love, sin, salvation, and other foci of religious inquiry* that have tended to ignore the systemic dimensions of human moral impact. Love, for example, must be re-theorized as pertaining not only to individual life but to the social structures of which we are a part; love becomes an economic-ecological-political vocation.
- ❖ *Replace its anthropocentric claims and assumptions with an eco-centric orientation to life.* This shift entails fascinating and challenging moves in language, conceptual frameworks, theory, and method, enabling us to re-understand humans as part of rather than apart from the larger web of life on Earth.
- ❖ *Be deeply self-critical and reconstructive.* Religious traditions will expose where their beliefs and practices have undergirded the human trajectory of Earth's exploitation and inter-human oppression, will retrieve healing and liberative dimensions of our traditions that may have been ignored or repressed, and will re-build Earth-honoring and justice-seeking beliefs and practices grounded in that critique and retrieval.
- ❖ *Be in dialogue with other sources of wisdom* including the natural and social sciences, legal studies, health fields, other fields of the humanities, the arts and more. Isolated disciplinary inquiry will not unlock the doors to an equitable and ecological future.

Arenas of knowledge must work in concert.

- ❖ *Be engaged interreligiously.* No single religious tradition holds the requisite spiritual and moral wisdom. By learning from the strengths of other religions, each will become more fully equipped to bring the life-giving power of religion to bear on the burning moral crisis of climate change.
- ❖ *Cultivate what I call "critical mystical vision."* This is the capacity to hold in view at one time three things: what is going on (especially systemic evil where it parades as good), what could be, and the power and presence of the sacred luring creation toward the good.
- ❖ *Embrace paradox,* and in particular the paradoxes of hope and despair, of profound joy and equally profound sorrow, and of anger as a companion of love and tutored by it.

Our moment in time is breathtaking and pivotal. The generations alive today will determine whether life continues on this generous planet in ways recognizably human and verdant. Exercising collaborative creativity, we can discover how to teach and learn in ways that cultivate sustainable Earth-human relations marked by justice. And we are called to draw on the deep wisdom of religious traditions in the quest for more equitable and ecological ways of shaping human societies.

May religious traditions bring their gifts to the great moral-spiritual challenge of the twenty-first century—to forge ways of being human that this glorious planet can sustain and that cultivate profound equity and compassion within the human community. May our teaching, learning, and scholarship at the GTU lead the way! ♦

*Cynthia Moe-Lobeda is professor of theological and social ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and Church Divinity School of the Pacific, and a core doctoral faculty member at the GTU. This article is adapted from her Excellence in Teaching Senior Faculty Lecture at the GTU in March 2018.*



# Art @ the GTU

## *Journeys of Faith: Portraits of LGBTQ Mormons*

Badè Museum of Biblical Archaeology  
1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley



**A**t Pacific School of Religion, the Badè Museum of Biblical Archaeology has long been the place to see exhibitions about the ancient Near East. This semester, thanks to a collaboration with the Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies (CLGS), the Badè is also the place to see contemporary portraiture, “Journeys of Faith: Portraits of LGBTQ Mormons.”

Through these portraits, Seattle artist Melinda Hannah examines intersections of sexuality and faith and shares stories of perseverance, love, and community. As CLGS Executive Director Bernard Schlager explained, “This exhibition testifies to the growing number of Mormons who are staying in the church while being out of the closet. Melinda’s portraits bring to life the realities—both the joys and struggles—of queer Mormons who are committed to their faith and honest with themselves about who they are. The portraits are dignified and they burst with color; each one invites the viewer to consider—and celebrate—the variety of LGBTQ people who are members of the LDS Church.”

The Badè Museum is open on Mondays from 10am–2pm, or by appointment (contact [bade@psr.edu](mailto:bade@psr.edu) or [bschlager@psr.edu](mailto:bschlager@psr.edu)); “Journeys of Faith” will be up through May 31. For information about special programs and events, see [clgs.org](http://clgs.org).

## *“The Beauty of Ink”*

GTU Flora Lamson Hewlett Library  
2400 Ridge Rd., Berkeley

**“T**he Beauty of Ink” graces the walls of the GTU library throughout the spring semester. This exhibition, organized by the Art of Ink in America Society (AIAS), links the beauty of calligraphy to the spiritual state of the calligrapher, with contemporary interpretations of the traditional art of *sho*. The works on exhibit are avant-garde expressions of the traditional form, exploring the expressive and aesthetic possibilities of line and space.

Along with the spring library exhibition, the GTU has organized a series of monthly workshops, including a February workshop on Vietnamese tradition led by monk Thich Giac Thein (pictured below) and a March event on Chinese-Japanese calligraphy led by Ron Nakasone. It’s not too late to sign up for a workshop with Debra Self on modern-abstract calligraphy (April 4) or Arash Shirinbab on Arabic-Persian calligraphy (May 2)—but space is limited. To register, email [rynakasone@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rynakasone@sbcglobal.net).

“The Beauty of Ink” will remain on display in the GTU Library through May 24. For hours, visit [www.gtu.edu/library](http://www.gtu.edu/library).



**For more on art at the GTU, visit [www.gtu.edu/events/exhibitions](http://www.gtu.edu/events/exhibitions)**





## Religion and Resistance

Doug Adams Gallery, Center for the Arts & Religion  
2465 LeConte Avenue, Berkeley

**"R**eligion and Resistance" at the Doug Adams Gallery (Center for the Arts & Religion, CARE) has received a good reception, including a positive review in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Through photographs, posters, and protest signs, this exhibition considers the role of religion in protest movements from the Vietnam War era to the present day. For additional information about the exhibition, check out CARE's brand-new app, "Doug Adams Gallery," where you can see videos, web links to featured artists, and more! Download it for free from the App Store or Google Play.

One of the exhibition highlights is a giant papier-mâché-and-fabric puppet of Archbishop Oscar Romero from Vermont's Bread and Puppet Theater. It was a long cross-country trip for the Archbishop! Last summer, GTU professors Kate Barush and Devin Zuber happened to be in New England with their families, and graciously accepted the job of acting as CARE representatives to Bread and Puppet, gaining permission to borrow the Archbishop puppet. When fall arrived, CARE made arrangements to bring the 20-foot-tall puppet to California before the Vermont winter set in. After some trial and

error, CARE Director Elizabeth Peña called an old friend who lives about two hours away from the Bread and Puppet barn: "Would you do me a favor?" Like the true friend she is, Elise Manning Sterling made the drive to pick up the Archbishop and brought him home. With help from her kids, Elise gently packed the oversized puppet into a giant box—carefully placing his eyeglasses into one of his hollow papier-mâché hands for safekeeping. The box was shipped to Oakland, then brought to the Doug Adams Gallery, where the Archbishop now presides elegantly over the gallery space.

Across the room is a grouping of posters about Archbishop Romero, from the collection of poster expert Lincoln Cushing and from the GTU's own archives. The Archbishop has been well received by visitors, the subject of many selfies as well as more serious reflection. One Instagram follower commented by quoting Archbishop Romero: "A church that doesn't provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed: what kind of gospel is that?"

"Religion and Resistance" will be on display through May 24 and can be visited on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 10am–3pm, or on Saturday, April 7, or Saturday, May 5, 10am–1pm. Exhibition catalogs are available for purchase.

# GTU celebrates **WOMEN'S** voices

To celebrate Women's History Month, we invited GTU alumnae to share stories, reflections, and highlights from their GTU experience. Below are just a few excerpts. Read many more at [www.gtu.edu/womens-voices-campaign](http://www.gtu.edu/womens-voices-campaign)



**“W**hat stands out most for me from my time at the GTU was the community and support for learning. I had excellent ethics professors who mentored me and who continue to be close colleagues today. Even more important were my fellow student colleagues. We had study groups together, shared notes on the readings for comprehensive exams, and encouraged one another in our dissertation writing. There was a sense of cooperation and camaraderie, not competition (even when we were all applying for jobs). The GTU helped me to thrive academically while also supporting my physical and emotional health.”

**Laura Stivers** (PhD, '00), *Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Education and Professor of Ethics, Dominican University of California*



**“S**tudying at CDSP and then the GTU not only challenged me but prepared me for the challenge of being a Native American woman ordained in the Episcopal Church. I am specifically grateful for the diversity of voices and theologies I found through the GTU. Classes at the Franciscan and Jesuit school in particular affirmed my identity and helped me define my understandings,

theology, and spirituality. The fact that I have been able to write and publish in theological journals, have written, reflected and published in several books on prayer, and my service to the church as Canon for Native American Ministry here in Arizona (after having served in Northern California and Los Angeles) could not have happened without these academic and spiritual experiences.”

The Rev. Canon **Debbie Royals**, Pascua Yaqui, RN (MDiv, CDSP; MA '06) *Canon for Native American Ministry, Episcopal Diocese of Arizona*



**“I**n addition to stellar academic preparation, one of the most impactful gifts I received from the GTU was the living examples of incredible female mentors whose teaching, service, and scholarship positively influenced and inspired me before, during, and after my doctoral program. From the gentle prodding of one faculty member whose question, ‘Have you ever thought about getting a PhD?’ that inspired my application, to those who challenged me to present at academic conferences during my program and to serve in leadership in our guild afterwards, I owe a debt of gratitude to the women who told me and showed me what being a faculty member is all about.”

**Debra J. Mumford** (PhD, '05), *Frank H. Caldwell Professor of Homi-*

*letics and Director, Money Matters for Ministry (Lilly Grant Program), Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary*



**“I**n the Fall of 2013, I embarked on two journeys: I started my academic career at GTU and I became a mother. Despite the

challenges posed by learning to be a scholar while also learning to be a mother, I have found in GTU a home far away from my original home in Cairo, Egypt. From the first day I set out as an MA student in Islamic Studies at the Center for Islamic Studies to this moment as I begin my PhD journey, the continuous support by staff and faculty have indeed propelled me to think of my career in a different way. Before joining GTU, I never thought I would be interested in teaching, now my vision is geared towards that goal.”

**May Kosba** (MA, '15), *presidential scholar and doctoral student in Historical and Cultural Studies of Religion, Center for Islamic Studies, GTU*



**“I**began my studies at GTU in 1991—only 20 years after the first female rabbi was ordained. This was a time when female

rabbis and cantors were still very controversial in the Jewish world. My professors at GTU, both male and female, were never anything but extremely supportive – even my one professor who was an Orthodox rabbi! After my ordination in 2003, I returned to GTU in a doctoral program at SFTS, where I received the same support. In short, no one at GTU ever told me I couldn't fulfill my calling; in fact, everyone, professors and staff alike, did all they could to encourage me!"

**Rabbi Shula Stevens Calmann** (MA, '05) is rabbi at Congregation Beth Shalom, Marysville, CA



"My time at GTU was vital in my development as a queer feminist scholar, author, and artist. Serving as program coordinator for the Women's

Studies in Religion Program was a beautiful way to ground my theoretical research in lived, practical realities. Professors and colleagues alike embodied intersectional feminism inside and outside the classroom in ways that inspired and empowered me to do likewise."

**Rev. Dr. Angela Yarber** (PhD, '10), author, artist, and Executive Director of the Holy Women Icons Project on Hawai'i Island

# Alumni News

**Brian Green** (MA, '06; PhD, '13) has been named director of technology ethics at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University. Brian is also a lecturer in engineering ethics at SCU's Graduate School of Engineering.

**David Phillips Hansen** (PhD, '88) celebrated the publication of *Native Americans, the Mainline Church, and the Quest for Interracial Justice* (Chalice Press, 2017). Hansen has spent more than 40 years in active ministry, serving pastorates in the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (DOC).

**Heup Young Kim** (PhD, '92) published *A Theology of Dao* (Orbis Books, 2017). Dr. Kim is professor emeritus of theology at Kangnam University, South Korea, and a past president of the Korean Society for Systematic Theology.

**Soo-Young Kwon** (PhD, '03) is now dean of the College of Theology and the United Graduate School of Theology of Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea. Dr. Kwon began his new position on February 1, and has served previously as professor of pastoral theology and director of the Center for Counseling and Coaching Services at United Graduate School of Theology.

**Carleen Mandolfo** (MA, '93) is now serving as associate provost for faculty development and diversity and professor of religious studies at Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

**Jeremiah McCarthy** (PhD, '85) was re-elected to the board of directors of the In Trust Center for Theological Schools. McCarthy is a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Tucson, who served for 18 years as professor of moral theology, academic dean, and finally rector-president of St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California.

**Som Pourfarzaneh** (PhD, '13) recently published a young adult novella, *Jinnspeak*, which follows a Pakistani teenager as she wrestles with her identity as a Muslim American and her burgeoning magical powers. Pourfarzaneh, who writes under the pen name M. S. Farzan, published his first urban fantasy novel, *Entromancy*, in 2015, and currently works as a Digital Marketing Manager in the video games industry.

**Andrea Sheaffer** (PhD, '13) recently published "Framing a Heroine: Judith's Counterparts in Biblical Villains" in Bloomsbury's *Biblical Reception 5* and currently serves on the Society of Biblical Literature's steering committee for the Bible and Visual Arts Program Unit. Andrea, who has worked as the GTU Director of Admissions since 2013, and fellow alum and former GTU faculty member **Som Pourfarzaneh** (PhD, '13) were married this past fall.

**Sandy Sullivan-Dunbar** (MA, '03) published her first book, *Human Dependency and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). Dr. Sullivan-Dunbar teaches Christian ethics at Loyola University Chicago, where she also serves as graduate program director in the department of theology.

**Cynthia Taylor** (PhD, '03) is assistant professor of religion and history at Dominican University, where she has been teaching the course "Liberation Theology: Passion for Justice" for 13 years. Taylor's work to include greater community engagement in the course were highlighted in a recent online essay by fellow GTU alum **Emily Wu** (PhD, '10), who is assistant director of community outreach and project development in Dominican's Service-Learning program.

**Jeremy D. Yunt** (MA, '99) published his latest book, *Faithful to Nature: Paul Tillich and the Spiritual Roots of Environmental Ethics* (Barred Owl Books, 2017). During his time at the GTU, Yunt worked as a writer and editor with the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS) on a special program focused on religion, science, and environmental ethics.





# GTU

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

2400 Ridge Road  
Berkeley, California 94709

510/649-2400



[www.gtu.edu](http://www.gtu.edu)



[/GraduateTheologicalUnion](https://www.facebook.com/GraduateTheologicalUnion)



[@tweetGTU](https://twitter.com/tweetGTU)

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
OAKLAND, CA  
PERMIT NO. 2508



**Virginia Burrus** (MA, 1984; PhD, 1991)  
Professor of Religion, Syracuse University  
GTU Alumna of the Year, 2017

“The GTU nurtured the connections between my feminism, activism, and scholarship—that’s a very important part of what I gained there. But the GTU also gave us a lot of freedom as scholars, and really empowered us to do the work each of us wanted to do. I’m quite sure I would be a very different teacher and thinker had I not attended the GTU.”

Your gift to the GTU supports a vibrant community of scholars who make a difference in our world.

Give online at [www.gtu.edu/give](http://www.gtu.edu/give) or mail your donation to Office of Advancement, GTU, 2400 Ridge Rd., Berkeley, CA 94709.

## Upcoming Events

### Can We *Do That*? Reading of the Sacred Texts as They Read Us

The 26th Annual Reading of the Sacred Texts featuring Barbara Green, OP (DSPT)

**Wednesday, April 4, 6:30-8:00 pm**

Dinner Board Room, 2400 Ridge Rd., Berkeley

### Persistent Voices: Women’s Studies in Religion Student Conference

**Friday, April 13, 9:00 am-3:00 pm**

Dinner Board Room, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley

### What Chinese Muslims Have to Say about Islamic History

Lecture by CIS visiting scholar Jessica Lilu Chen

**Tuesday, April 17, 12:30-2:00 pm**

Dinner Board Room, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley

### GTU 2018 Commencement Exercises

**Thursday, May 10, 4:00 pm**

Zaytuna College 2401 LeConte Ave., Berkeley

For more events, visit [www.gtu.edu/events](http://www.gtu.edu/events)