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# Williams



**STANDING  
STRONG**  
Against  
sexual  
assault



## ENDING SEXUAL ASSAULT

at Williams is truly a community-wide effort. Scores of people—including those depicted here and on the cover—are engaged in education and prevention as well as survivor support. For more information about the college's policies and initiatives, visit <http://bit.ly/wmssexassault>.

Isabel Abraham-Raveson '15

Feminist Collective

justin adkins

Davis Center

Sarah Bolton

Dean of the College

Lei Brutus '16

Women's Rugby





On the front cover (from left): Nakita VanBiene '15, Rape and Sexual Assault Network, women's rugby; Meg Bossong '05, Director of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response; Henry Bergman '15, Men for Consent; Beverly Williams, Health Center Director of Multicultural Outreach. Back cover: David Boyer, Director of Campus Safety and Security.



**Morris Kolman '18**  
Men for Consent

**Adam Falk**  
President

**Dianna Mejia '15**  
Track and Field Captain

**John Maimone-Medwick '15**  
Lacrosse Captain



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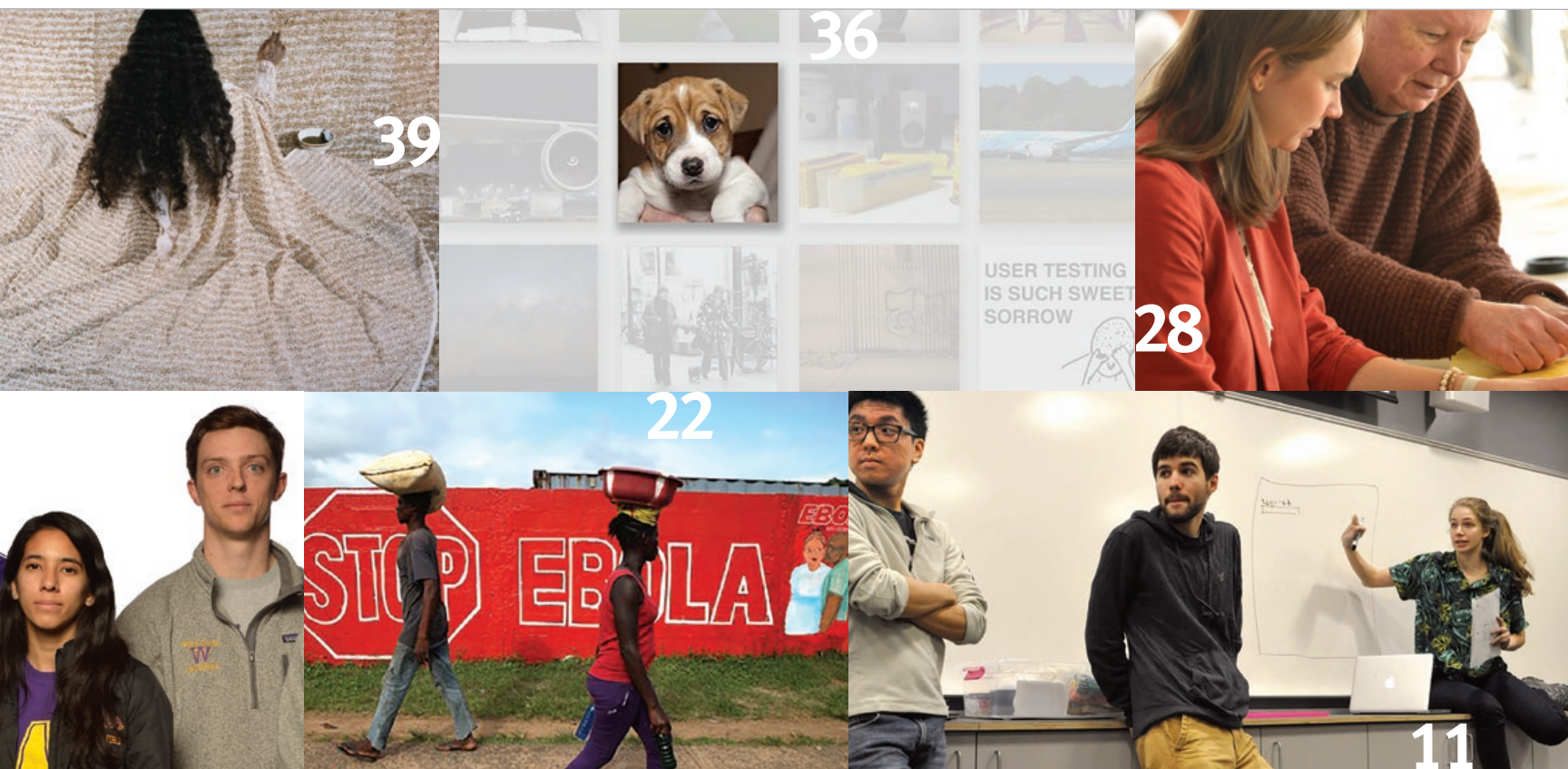
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# Williams





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PHOTO BY MARK MCCARTHY



Adam Falk

My personal commitment, as firm as any I can make, is that sexual assault must be eliminated in our community.

## Ending Sexual Violence at Williams

As an educator, as a father—as a human being—I hope for a day when sexual violence does not occur. But we can't wish this problem away. As Williams' president, it's on me to speak about this scourge, to tell you how we're addressing it at Williams and to lift up the work of those who've committed themselves to supporting survivors of sexual violence and to ridding our campus of it for good.

That's why the article "Standing Strong Against Sexual Assault" (p. 12) may be the most important article that *Williams Magazine* has ever published. I urge you to read every word.

The college has been working urgently to address sexual assault for years, and it has been my very highest student priority since I began as president in 2010. Dean of the College Sarah Bolton led a comprehensive survey of our students in the spring of 2011, the results of which revealed that 5 percent of female students reported having been raped in the previous 12 months, and many more—male and female—had experienced some kind of nonconsensual sexual touching. The effects of sexual assault are devastating, and the only acceptable rate of incidence is zero. Until we get there, nothing is more important.

And so by fall 2011 we incorporated sexual assault prevention and response education into our JA training, and we convened the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness task force, still in existence, to examine every aspect of this work and to build upon it. We hired staff with expertise in preventing and responding to sexual assault, and, most importantly, we've partnered with students to bring about the cultural changes needed to eliminate sexual assault at Williams. I started talking openly about the problem in a letter to the community

in February 2012. We've continued that commitment to openness, publicly sharing data every year on the prevalence of sexual misconduct, including the numbers of reports and their outcomes.

Last fall, I was honored to be invited to the White House for the launch of its bystander campaign, It's On Us. At that event, President Obama pointed out that the work his administration is supporting builds on what students are doing within their own campus cultures. I agree. The problem of sexual assault is widespread, and we have much to learn from other campuses, but the solutions we create here are specific to Williams, building thoughtfully on our own best traditions. At Williams, for instance, we know that change comes when the whole community unites in working for it, and with this issue, as with so many others, everyone feels a responsibility to address it.

Let me be frank about one more thing. Over the history of this country, there's much to be ashamed of in our response to sexual violence. Survivors too often have been ignored, minimized, blamed and re-victimized. Only in recent years has this situation improved, and even now it's far from perfect. At Williams, too, we've not always done nearly as well as we should have in addressing sexual assault. I wish it were otherwise, but we exist within our society and all too often share its flaws.

We acknowledge this history, however, to more clearly see the future. My personal commitment, as firm as any I can make, is that sexual assault must be eliminated in our community. With the dedicated work of the students, staff, faculty and alumni you can read about in this magazine, I'm confident that we're on that path. We won't rest until we get there.

—Adam Falk, president



## WHY LIBERAL ARTS?



I applaud the Committee on Educational Policy's effort to explore the question "Why Liberal Arts?" (fall 2014). However, the inclusion of alumni on the

committee would provide valuable perspective on how the breadth of academic, cultural, athletic and social experiences available through a Williams education creates the foundation for a rewarding and fulfilling personal and professional life. We alumni live the value of that education and can share what worked well, what didn't, what the invaluable and treasured opportunities were and what we now know we overlooked. "Williams taught me how to think" summarizes my four years of college. The development of skills in critical reasoning, receptiveness to new ideas, skepticism, diligence, attention to detail, valuing diverse opinions, perseverance, personal expression and inquisitiveness is one short answer to the question, "Why Liberal Arts?" Inviting other alumni viewpoints would make the committee's work even more effective in examining the Williams experience.

—Bill Leininger '86, San Diego, Calif.

## HISTORY OF THE BOOK



"History of the Book" (fall 2014) was a lively printer's case of printing history. But one important little machine was missing: the manual typewriter. Its

keys gave first light to most books and other writings for 100 years after the 1870s, and it is still used in the developing world. It helped feed my family and led me to a newsy, clickety-clack start in newspapering. The manual typewriter had more inventors than keys. One American, Christopher Latham Sholes, is credited with the first commercially successful one in 1873; he coined the word "typewriter" and developed the famous "QWERTY" top row. For a story in *The Baltimore Sun*, consumer advocate Ralph Nader and Baltimore novelist Stephen Dixon told me about their refusal to write on anything else. Dixon said, "Computers feel awful. There was nothing to it. Too easy. So ticky-tacky. I feel creative on a manual. I love the keyboard action. It's like playing a piano." Nader liked banging away on a manual machine that sounds alive. My boss deviously

assigned me, a non-technical scribbler, to learn computers and teach our newspaper staff the same in 1975. At first, typewriter and pencil/pad were my only teaching tools that didn't crash, but we finally said a sad farewell to the old faithful Royals, Smith Coronas and Underwoods.

—Ernest F. Imhoff '59, Baltimore, Md.

In "History of the Book," the caption for the 17th century printer's type case is incorrect, stating that it "holds all the individual pieces of metal type to set a text by hand, with small letters in the 'lower' part of the case and capital letters in the 'upper part.'" In fact, two separate cases are involved. The upper case is a double-cap case to hold capital and small capital letters. The lower case holds miniscules, figures, punctuation and letter spaces. Since text uses relatively few capitals, they are held farthest from the compositor.

—Charles Klensch '48, New York, N.Y.

## SEX WORK AND SPORTS EVENTS



In "Sex Work and Sports Events" (fall 2014), using "sex work" to refer to prostituted people represents a perspective that supports legalized prostitution. This

term normalizes an industry that is based on exploitation and avoids recognizing the structures that allow the commercial sex industry to be growing across the globe. The answer is not an illogical effort to better regulate or legalize an industry that is based on inequality. This leads to focusing on allegedly improving working conditions within a slavery system instead of abolishing slavery outright. The most effective effort is to criminalize demand perpetrated by the (mainly) men driving the industry, hold them accountable for buying people's bodies and decriminalize those being prostituted—the Nordic model. Recognizing the link between the porn industry in creating demand is integral to working toward change. The vast majority of prostituted people are not there by choice—most are trafficked and come from high-risk populations such as foster care in the U.S. While it's extremely important to initiate multiple approaches to addressing the problem of prostitution, like providing support services to help people get out of "the life," it's equally important to address the risk factors such as poverty that ensnare mostly women into "the life." To learn more, please read Rachel Lloyd's

book *Girls Like Us* and Victor Malerek's ethnographic research about the horrors of sex slavery in his books *The Natashas* and *The Johns*.

Where are the strong feminist voices within the women's, gender and sexuality studies department at Williams who are willing to challenge the construct that it is acceptable for men to buy people's bodies—usually those who are less advantaged—and use them for their sexual pleasure? College students deserve to be taught about the realities of sex trafficking and the commercial sex industry.

—Alexis Ladd, PA '15, Boxborough, Mass.

## JEWIS AT WILLIAMS



With regard to "Gentlemen Jews" (summer 2014): whether or not my relative (on my mother's side) Edward S. Greenbaum, Class of 1910, or his brother

Lawrence Greenbaum, Class of 1909, was screening Jewish applicants, my father, Harry Meirowitz (later Harry Merwin), Class of 1920, the son of a working-class immigrant Jewish family, was not excluded from Williams. After his graduation he attended Harvard Law School and later married a close relative of the Greenbaum family. When I attended Williams as a member of the Class of 1950, anti-semitism was not entirely absent from the campus, with very few of the fraternities accepting Jewish students and some nasty outbreaks in the dorms (one of which I vividly remember to this day). It is clear that the situation has improved greatly in the 60-plus years since I was a student.

—Don Merwin '50, Denver, Colo.



**Williams Magazine welcomes letters about articles or items published in recent issues. Please send comments to [magazine@williams.edu](mailto:magazine@williams.edu) or**

**Williams Magazine, P.O. Box 676, Williamstown, MA 01267-0676. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.**



PHOTOS BY ROMAN IWASIWKA



### CLAIMING WILLIAMS: A DAY OF LEARNING

On Feb. 5, participants in Claiming Williams joined together to ask and answer the question “Why Should I Care?” The day began with opening remarks from President Adam Falk, who said the goal of Claiming Williams is “not to feel good about Williams. The goal is to make Williams better. So what I wish you is a good day of listening—and a good day of learning.” After four students led a talk-show style preview of the day’s schedule, students, faculty and staff took part in discussions, performances and events well into the evening aimed at building and sustaining a more inclusive community. Among the topics they explored were empathy, Islamophobia, local borders, mental health, political action and trust. Chaédria LaBouvier ’07 and her mother, Collette Flanagan, founders of Mothers Against Police Brutality, were the keynote speakers that evening. Flanagan, whose son was killed two years ago by a Dallas police officer, told those gathered in Chapin Hall that they “must all take a stand. ... If this broken mother can pick up the pieces ... you can certainly contribute.”

### Harrington Honored for Outstanding Research

The Computer Research Association has awarded **Emma Harrington ’15** its Outstanding Undergraduate Researcher Award for her work involving software defect detection.

A computer science and economics double major, Harrington is writing a senior thesis on what motivates people to produce free content online. She is a Phi Beta Kappa inductee, teaching assistant and Computer Science Class of 1960s Scholar, and she is captain of the women’s softball team. This past summer, she performed independent research that was later presented at the Grace Hopper Celebration, a conference for women in computing.



Emma Harrington

Each year the Computer Research Association recognizes four undergraduate students—two male and two female—in North American colleges and universities who show outstanding potential in an area of computing research.

### Williams Receives Carnegie Designation for Engagement

Williams’ engagement with the wider community, including its student volunteer programs, experiential courses and public events such as Winter Blitz and the Great Day of Service, have earned the college a Community Engagement Classification for 2015 from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Williams was one of 240 recipients selected nationally—and one of 36 private institutions and 17 baccalaureate colleges.

Williams partners with a number of groups to provide community service, with many efforts coordinated by the Center for Learning in Action.



# Sharif Rosen Named Muslim Chaplain

**Sharif Rosen** joined the Williams community in February as Muslim chaplain and assistant director of the Center for Learning in Action (CLiA). Rosen is the second person to serve in this role, which strengthens the partnership between the chaplain's office and CLiA.

In addition to serving as a religious, programmatic and educational resource to Muslim students, Rosen is collaborating with the college's three other chaplains to enrich religious and spiritual life at Williams.



Sharif Rosen

He's also working to encourage student service, advise student organizations and develop community partnerships. He previously served as Muslim and multi-faith adviser at Dartmouth College and as a volunteer prison chaplain, and he is a trained sexual assault responder.

"The experience Sharif brings as a coordinator of engagement in educational as well as community-based organizations will serve him particularly well," says Rick Spalding, college chaplain. "He brings a deep grounding in his own spirituality and in well-informed respect for other religious and spiritual practices."

Rosen's mother's roots are Roman Catholic, and his father is an "orthodox Agnostic" from a Jewish family. Says Rosen: "I found a vibrancy in the example of the Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings be upon him) that only resonated more fully when I saw its traces, in all its beauty, among those dedicated to living by and preserving it."

# Freeman to Study Pure Math as Churchill Scholar

**Jesse Freeman '15** was one of 14 students nationally to be awarded a Churchill Scholarship for study at the University of Cambridge in 2015-16. He is the third Williams student ever to receive this honor.

The Bethesda, Md., native plans to pursue a Master of Advanced Study in pure mathematics and hopes to go on to conduct research and teach at the university level.

A math major, Freeman is a teaching assistant and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Berkshire Symphony and the debate team. During his junior year, he studied abroad with the Williams-Exeter Programme at Oxford, where he organized an undergraduate mathematics conference.



Jesse Freeman

Freeman, a Class of 1960s Scholar, is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Goldwater Scholarship and a National Science Foundation grant. He's also given two invited presentations at the University of Glasgow on applied mathematics.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Campus Tours

As the college tour season ramps up, thousands will flock to campus to see what Williams is about. Student tour guides offer an engaging and entertaining look at the college, fielding questions and sharing history and legend. Here's a snapshot of last year's tour data.

**80**  
TOUR  
GUIDES

**1.25**  
MILES PER  
TOUR

**1,052**  
TOURS OFFERED

**1,315**  
MILES COVERED

All together, tour guides walked the distance from Williamstown to just past New Orleans—nearly all of it backward!

**6,348**  
PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS  
TAKING TOURS



## Five Faculty Receive Tenure

Five Williams faculty members have been promoted to associate professor with tenure, effective July 1. They are:

**Quamrul Ashraf, economics.** Ashraf's research focuses on topics in long-run economic growth and development, economic demography and agent-based computational macroeconomics. He teaches courses on macroeconomics and economic growth and development—both in the economics department, where he's technology coordinator, and in the master's program at the Center for Development Economics. He serves on the college's Honor and Discipline Committee.

**Mea Cook, geosciences.** Cook studies the ocean's role in natural climate variability across time scales ranging from decades to hundreds of thousands of years, including natural fluxes of methane and carbon dioxide between the ocean and atmosphere and the role of ocean circulation in ice age cycles. She teaches courses on oceanography and climate change. She serves on the Faculty Steering Committee and the advisory committee to the Environmental Studies Program.

**Justin Crowe '03, political science.** Crowe's research interests include the Supreme Court, constitutional law and theory and American political and constitutional development, political thought and culture and political institutions. He teaches courses including Power, Politics and Democracy in America; American Constitutionalism; Problems and Progress in American Democracy; and American Political Thought. He serves on the Faculty Compensation Committee.

**David Gürçay-Morris '96, theater.** Gürçay-Morris is a set designer and experimental theater artist. His recent show with playwright/director Young Jean Lee, *Straight White Men*, was a Top 10 Show of 2014 in both the *New York Times* and *Time Out*. He teaches an introductory course in theatrical staging and design as well as upper-level classes in scenic design, 20th-century scenography and devised theater. He serves on the Faculty Review Panel and Winter Study Committee.

**Nate Kornell, psychology.** Kornell's research interests include efficiency in learning and how typical learners understand and manage their own learning. He teaches Introductory Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Cognition and Education, and Perspectives on Psychological Issues. He serves on the college's Committee on Information Technology.

## 244 Admitted to Class of 2019 Via Early Decision

The college has offered admission to 244 students under its early decision plan. The 112 women and 132 men comprise 44 percent of the incoming Class of 2019, which has a target size of 550.

Students hail from 33 states as well as 10 countries. U.S. students of color make up nearly 30 percent of the group, which includes 27 African-Americans, 25 Asian-Americans, 20 Latino/as and one Native American. Twenty-two are from families in which neither parent has a four-year college degree, and nearly 20 percent of the students come from low-income families.

Average SAT scores for the group are 709 in critical reading, 701 in math and 707 in writing, with an average ACT score of 32. Accomplished artists, athletes, musicians and actors are well represented in the group.

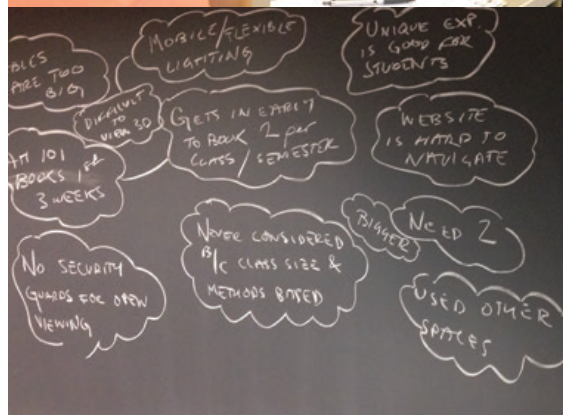






PHOTO BY THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

A CLOSER  
LOOK

## Design School

From her perch on a counter in a second-floor classroom of Sawyer Library, Pamela Mishkin '16 draws four buckets on a dry-erase board. She, Matt LaRose '16 and Chris Owyang '16 (all pictured, above) are explaining how they'd redesign the college's online course catalog, which is clunky and difficult to navigate.

It's the second week of Design School, a new Winter Study course taught by math professor Satyan Devadoss and Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) Class of 1956 Director Christina Olsen. Based on the famous Stanford Design Program, the course synthesizes "classical academics with Silicon Valley technology and a startup culture," giving 15 students four weeks to tackle large-scale problems at the college using a process called design thinking.

Design thinking begins with empathy—"spending a lot of time understanding people's needs through observation, immersion and interviewing," says Eugene Korsunskiy '08, a graduate of the Stanford Design Program and former lecturer there. Now coordinator of design initiatives at the University of Vermont, he visited the Winter Study class in early January to share his insight.

The students first practiced design thinking on small projects. One assignment was to improve the experience for people who eat alone in the dining halls. Students rearranged tables at Mission, placed prototype book holders at some of the tables and then watched what happened for five hours. For another project, a group created in the basement of Paresky a grocery store that they stocked with fake

groceries. Visitors were invited to share feedback. (Items like toothpaste turned out to be highly desired.) The data students collected for both projects helped them brainstorm and reshape their ideas.

They then moved on to larger problems, like the course catalog. Unlike the current one, where search functionality is limited and results are listed alphabetically, the students' proposal is based on weighted keywords. So a search of the word "art" would yield a list of results topped by courses in the art department, followed by those that include the word "art" multiple times in their descriptions.

"The search is creating the space for you to explore," Mishkin says.

The course catalog project will be the basis for real-life changes at Williams. Mishkin and LaRose, Devadoss' research assistants, have been working on the catalog redesign since early October. In the spring Devadoss will present their best ideas—refined by their work in Design School—to an ad-hoc committee he chairs that's part of the college's Committee on Educational Policy. The plan is for changes to be in place before registration opens for the fall semester.

Other Design School projects—such as rethinking Lasell Gym and the entrance to WCMA and its Rose Study Gallery to improve visitors' experiences—may also have wider potential than just teaching design thinking. "The museum projects, too, could really happen," Devadoss says. "This is a real process—and they have the ear of the director. You can't ask for more."

—Francesca Shanks



# Standing



Emily Roach '16  
Co-Chair

Shannon Zikovich '15  
Co-Chair

Alexandra Mendez '17

Nakita VanBiene '15

Audrey Thomas '17

Scott Shelton '17

[ RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT NETWORK ]

PORTRAITS BY MARK MCCARTY



Players collide with one another. Elbows fly. Feet pound the ground. And Nakita VanBiene '15 feels safe here on the rugby pitch, surrounded by her teammates. |“The nature of the sport is that if you don’t work together as 15 people, you’re going to lose,” says VanBiene, women’s rugby co-captain. “In order for us to succeed, we need to be right there with each other. When you’re running down the field and you know people are behind you on either side, ready to tackle for you—that’s something really special.” | It’s a fitting analogy for the community-driven approach Williams has been taking to end sexual violence on campus.



AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

BY CAROLINE ROTHSTEIN

Meg Bossong '05,  
Director of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Sarah Bolton,  
Dean of the College

Beverly Williams,  
Director of Multicultural Outreach

Donna Denelli-Hess,  
Health Educator

[ DEAN OF THE COLLEGE'S OFFICE ]

[ HEALTH SERVICES ]



VanBiene, a member of the Rape and Sexual Assault Network (RASAN), is one of scores of students, staff, faculty and alumni working individually and in groups, formally and informally and—most importantly—*together* on prevention and survivor support. Whether it's educating students about consent, piloting a smartphone app that rallies friends in an emergency, rethinking reporting and investigation protocols or training community members to offer one-on-one support for survivors and their loved ones, everyone has work to do.

The locus of the work rests in the office of the Dean of the College with Meg Bossong '05, Williams' first-ever director of sexual assault prevention and response. She says the collective ownership of the movement to end sexual violence speaks both to a shared sense of its importance and to the kind of community Williams endeavors to create.

"Williams encourages people to bring their whole selves to the community," says Bossong, who spent several years managing community engagement for the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, a national leader in sexual assault work, before returning to Williams in April 2014. "People make a choice to come to a place so small, and you have a unique opportunity to work on these issues in an intensive way."

The work itself isn't new. As a student, Bossong was a junior advisor (JA) and member of RASAN, offering support for survivors and educating students about prevention. What *is* new is the intensity and urgency of conversations taking place all across campus and among alumni—and how widespread the work has become within the community, with students in partnership with the staff, faculty and administrators in a distinctly Williams way.

## The Administrators

One in five women and one in 16 men are sexually assaulted during college, according to the National Justice Institute. And between 80 percent and 95 percent of these assaults are never reported to police or campus officials.



David Johnson '71,  
Dean of First-Year  
Students

Jennifer Hasenfus,  
International Student  
Adviser

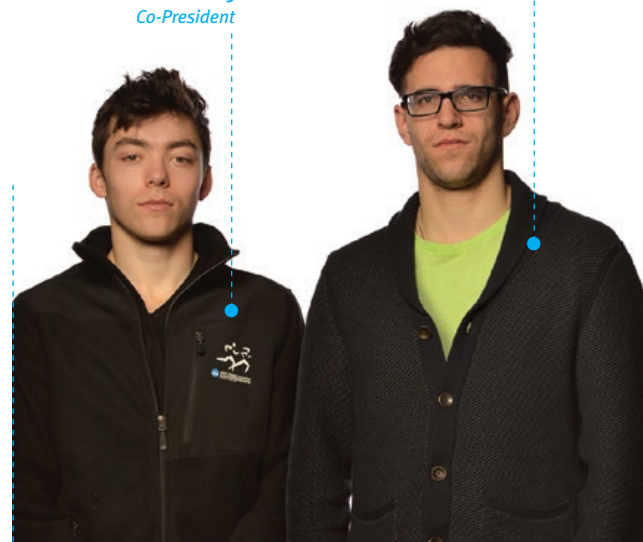
Rosanna Reyes,  
Dean of First-Generation  
Initiatives

Stephen Sneed,  
Associate Dean of  
the College

{ DEANS }

Cole Townsend '15  
Co-President

Henry Bergman '15  
Co-President



The statistics reflect a reality from which Williams is not immune. And they underlie the decision years ago by Williams President Adam Falk and Dean of the College Sarah Bolton to make addressing sexual assault a top priority.

"The fact that sexual assaults affect so many students at Williams—hundreds each year—is completely unacceptable," Falk wrote in a February 2012 letter to the community outlining existing efforts, such as educational programming in entries (residential units for first-year students) and training for JAs (juniors who live with and support them).

In that same letter, Falk announced the creation of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness group (SAPA) to examine and advance every aspect of the college's work on this front. SAPA meets biweekly, bringing staff on the front lines of student support—campus safety and security, the dean's office, health services, athletics and the Davis Center—together with a broad swath of students, including members of RASAN, College Council, Minority Coalition, varsity teams and the Queer Student Union.

Chandler Sherman '11, a RASAN alumna, met one-on-one with Falk early in his presidency. "The fact that the administration even made sexual assault an issue—that they sought me out, that they wanted to make a difference—blew me away," she says.

"Not only were they willing to see the shortcomings in policies," Sherman adds, "but they wanted to figure out from survivors and people who work with them what had to come from students and what had to come from the administration. Where did policies need to change, and where did we need to work on changing student culture?"

Falk and Bolton speak frankly and frequently with students, alumni, parents and trustees about ending sexual assault at Williams. "If we talk openly about this institutionally, then everyone understands they have a role to play," Falk says. "It's up to everyone."

An anonymous 2011 American College Health Association student survey found that 5 percent of female students reported having been raped at Williams in the previous year, and many more female and male students experienced some kind of nonconsensual sexual touching. Most cases aren't reported. Seven incidents of sexual assault were





Matthew Hayes '17

Graham Buchan '17

Ben Metrikin '18

Chris D'Silva '18

Morris Kolman '18

Connor Swan '18

## [ MEN FOR CONSENT ]

reported in the 2010-11 school year, 13 during 2012-13 and six last year. About half of the reporting students pursued disciplinary or legal action, in most cases working with the dean's office. In nearly all the cases adjudicated by the college, the perpetrator was found to have violated the college's Code of Conduct and was removed from campus either permanently or for a period of at least two semesters.

The college also notifies the police of each report made of a sexual assault on campus, withholding, when asked to, the name of the survivor, and offers personal support to any survivor who chooses to work with police on a criminal investigation.

When Bolton, a physics professor, became dean of the college in 2010, she began to hear student reports of sexual assaults—often long after the incidents took place. A variety of factors discouraged survivors from reporting, she says, including ongoing relationships between survivors and perpetrators, the emotionally paralyzing nature of trauma itself, fear that disciplinary sanctions might result in retribution and even a friend's reaction to hearing about an assault.

"The first person they told was a friend, who shut them down," Bolton says she sometimes learned. "Three years later, they came to the dean, which gave me a sense of how hard it was to talk about on campus. If I'm the second-easiest person to talk to, there's a big problem."

What survivors found when they did talk to Bolton was someone who "managed to center the experiences of survivors," says Em Nuckols '16, who two years ago was the Queer Student Union's representative on SAPA. Bolton, Nuckols says, "started SAPA. She went to all the meetings. She gave so much to this particular form of activism because she knew the Williams process wasn't working."

SAPA became an empathetic and active hub. Its work has included the creation of a website with comprehensive information about sexual assault policies, protocols and support systems; a clear definition of consent; professional training for all student affairs staff, JAs and other student leaders; and improved orientation programming for first-year students. The college updated its system for distributing data on sexual assault so as not to trigger survivors, and it changed policy language to be more inclusive with regard to gender and sexuality.

Major policy changes emerged from SAPA's work. It used to be that cases handled by the college were investigated by the dean's office and campus safety and then adjudicated by the dean. Since the fall of 2013, a third-party professional conducts investigations in cases involving sexual assault, domestic violence or stalking. A small panel of staff—experts on the college's consent policy—then determines whether the college's Code of Conduct has been violated and, if so, what sanctions to impose. The new procedures are intended to improve the effectiveness and fairness for both survivors and alleged perpetrators.

As a result of SAPA's efforts, the college realized a crucial piece of infrastructure was missing—a full-time, permanent staff member to oversee the growing work to address sexual assault. The college conducted a national search for the position in fall 2013; Bossong, who had been a consultant to SAPA and the college, was uniquely qualified.

In January, SAPA distributed Williams' first-ever campus climate survey to better understand patterns of sexual assault and intimate partner violence as well as to gain insight on how prevention and response can be further improved. By mid-February, nearly two-thirds of students had responded to the survey, the results of which will be made public this spring.

Falk and Bolton continue to share updates on the college's work around sexual assault in regular communications with the Williams community. In Falk's most recent campus-wide letter, at the start of the spring semester, he wrote, "Our thanks go to the students, staff and faculty who are leading these efforts, which require the involvement of all of us to bring the incidence of assault on our campus to the only tolerable number—zero."

## The Experts

Meg Bossong remembers vividly the first time she heard someone speak openly about sexual assault. It was in the fall of 2001, during her First Days orientation. A survivor of rape addressed the freshman class as part of first-year educational programming. Bossong was so moved by the talk, she joined RASAN that winter.





Tony Sinico,  
Associate Director

Alison Warner,  
Security Patrol Supervisor

Shaun Lennon,  
Operations Supervisor

Susan Monroe,  
Officer

David Boyer  
Director

[ CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY ]

Now she's the point person for myriad people and initiatives, leading both SAPA and Sexual Assault Survivor Services (SASS)—specially trained staff from the dean's office, health services, the Davis Center and the chaplain's office who provide confidential, 24/7 counseling and support by phone and in person to survivors of sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. In addition to working with survivors in the immediate aftermath to ascertain medical needs and discuss reporting options, SASS advocates can provide support at any time, accompanying survivors to medical and legal appointments, connecting them with counseling and other services—or just listening.

"I can put my work life and my home life on hold for the amount of time needed to help a survivor," says health educator and SASS advocate Donna Denelli-Hess. "I tell students, 'You don't have to walk this alone. To the extent that you let me, I will be right by your side.'"

She and Ruth Harrison, retired director of health services, were at the heart of Williams' work for 20 years, before Bolton became dean and Bossong joined the staff. Bossong worked closely with Denelli-Hess and Harrison when she was a JA and RASAN member. Says Bossong: "One of the critical tasks many schools are trying to undertake is to figure out how to build supportive relationships among key confidential staff and students. Donna and Ruth were doing that two decades ago."

Denelli-Hess says Bossong's return has been integral to recent progress in addressing sexual assault: "Having one person primarily responsible for keeping us all on track is so important."

The first response a survivor receives is critical. While there are important timelines for things like forensic exams, which must be conducted within 120 hours of an assault, it's also crucial for survivors to know they're heard and supported. "It's not my place to even name what happened as sexual assault," says Denelli-Hess. "You tell me what's happened. What is this thing for you?"

She and others also help students understand the difference between a campus disciplinary process and a criminal proceeding—between a college no-contact order, say, and a court-issued restraining order.

Under Title IX, a federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in higher education, colleges and universities must have systems in place for investigating and adjudicating sexual assault cases. Campus safety and security director David Boyer says that, in his 25 years with the college, only three or four sexual assaults have been reported directly to

his office immediately after they occurred. Most often, campus safety works with the dean's office to prepare no-contact orders, which protect survivors from seeing their perpetrators on campus.

While campus safety's role in the aftermath of assault is critical, Boyer has long been committed to prevention education. "We'd much rather spend hours, days and weeks preventing something that could possibly cause a lifetime of distress," he says.

Bossong, meanwhile, builds relationships with individuals and groups across campus, leads workshops and trainings on consent and bystander intervention with JAs and other groups, and provides material for students who want to lead their own trainings. Last fall, when the Feminist Collective organized a Carry That Weight day of action inspired by the activism and art of Columbia student Emma Sulkowicz, Bossong helped students carry a mattress across campus in the rain.

"She's rejuvenated a lot of people," says Black Student Union member Sevonna Brown '15. "She's created a more open, inclusive and intersectional space. She's brought domestic violence forward in the conversations and illuminated the range of intimate partner violence that can occur here in ways students hadn't been able to conceptualize before."

## The Activists

Prevention education begins with First Days, when freshmen see a performance about sexual assault and rape culture by the outside group Speak About It. Afterward, RASAN members facilitate conversations with each entry, teaching students what consent means and how to be an active bystander (intervening in situations before they escalate into assaults) and providing information on how to seek survivor support.

This year, JAs encouraged their entries to download the Circle of 6 app, which Williams began piloting in the fall. The app creates a circle of friends who can be texted or called for help easily. There are also quick links to reach RASAN, SASS, Campus Safety and 911. RASAN co-chair Emily Roach '16 says that by encouraging bystander intervention, the app can play a role in prevention and shifting campus culture.

RASAN offers one-on-one counseling and support for survivors, friends and their loved ones through a 24/7 hotline and in person. They also organize Williams' Take Back the Night, an evening each April in which survivors speak out about their experiences.



JAs, too, play an important role in continuing the conversations begun during First Days and offering immediate and ongoing help for students in need. “Support doesn’t end after psych services or a report,” says JA board president Jackie Lane ’16. “You’re helping that person through the whole process of recovery and regaining self-confidence in this setting.”

The work can be grueling, says RASAN alumna Chandler Sherman. While she was a JA, some 45 students, mostly first-years, came to her for advice and support regarding non-consensual sexual experiences.

It was also rewarding work, Sherman says. One night she returned to her entry and found one of her freshmen—a popular, straight male athlete—on the couch in the common room. When she asked why he wasn’t in his bed, he told her he’d brought a girl home and realized she was too drunk to give consent, so he made the decision to leave.

A freshman-year experience propelled Henry Bergman ’15 to get involved in ending sexual assault. He made an offhand comment using the word rape—often used to describe a difficult situation or being taken advantage of. The comment deeply upset a female friend, who explained she’d been sexually assaulted at Williams. “It ended up being one of the most important conversations of my life,” Bergman says.

He noticed posters around campus of male varsity athletes and JAs promoting consent, sponsored by the newly formed group Men for Consent (MFC). He started attending meetings and was named co-president later that year. He’s led the group ever since.

MFC meets in Jenness House to talk about ways to dismantle rape culture and to consider men’s roles in ending sexual assault. As with RASAN, a big focus is on peer-to-peer conversations.

“We do a lot on how to talk to friends without being confrontational, because the stereotype is that when sexual violence comes up, guys shut down and get defensive,” Bergman says.

Bergman has seen a shift in campus culture, especially as other student groups have taken on the issue of sexual assault. Last year, men’s lacrosse captain David Lee ’14 began what’s now called the Athlete-Driven Initiative Against Sexual Assault to help teams facilitate discussions and reconsider athletes’ roles in helping to prevent assault.

This year, at the end of Winter Study in January, the current co-presidents of the initiative, lacrosse captain Dan Whittam ’15



Margaux Cowden,  
Visiting Assistant Professor of English

Kathryn Kent ’88,  
Professor of English

[ FACULTY ]

and track captain and RASAN member Dianna Mejia ’15, held a workshop for varsity and club sport athletes. Sixty attended, with most teams represented; participants then went back and shared the training and information with their teams.

President Falk says activists are essential to ending sexual assault at Williams. “Just as there is no substitute for institutional commitment to investigation, adjudication, holding people accountable and support for survivors,” he says, “there’s no substitute for student agency.”

And while it’s the core mission of groups like RASAN, MFC and the athlete initiative to end assault, other student organizations—the Black Student Union (BSU) and Queer Student Union (QSU), for instance—have taken up the cause as well. In December, students organized Black Healing Week, which included a session focused on trauma recovery, particularly sexual trauma. Bossong and Beverly Williams, director of multicultural outreach for the health center, facilitated the session, in which students discussed personal experiences with trauma and worked on healing through guided meditation.

What stands out to Bossong, 10 years after her own graduation, is how broad and inclusive student activism on the issue has



Zander Masucci ’16

Andree Heller ’15

John Maimone-Medwick ’15

Steven Kiesel ’15

Becca Bell ’15

[ ATHLETE-DRIVEN INITIATIVE ]



become—and how much trust underlies the collaboration between students and the administration. Justin Adkins, assistant director of gender, sexuality and activism at the Davis Center and a member of SAPA and SASS, agrees. “I don’t think students have to continuously push us to do work around sexual assault, because we’re actually at a place where, at all levels of this institution, it’s something at the forefront of everybody’s mind and work,” he says.

## The Professors

English and women’s, gender and sexuality studies professor Kathryn R. Kent ’88 says that, in comparison to the 1980s, when she was a student, Williams today “is so much more aware of and proactive about doing all it possibly can ... to deal with sexual assault and violence, to support survivors and to create a culture where people are looking out for one another and thinking about what it means to be an ally.”

She and other faculty engage with sexual violence in their scholarship, but they’re also active listeners and supporters. Margaux Cowden, visiting assistant professor of English and of women’s, gender and sexuality studies, served as an adviser for a Winter Study project by RASAN training co-coordinator Nakita VanBiene, who wanted to make the group’s training curriculum more inclusive. Cowden, whose scholarship involves the construction of sexuality in early 20th-century literature, says she and VanBiene explored “how campus prevention and support models overlap with feminist interpretations of sexual violence.” They also asked questions such as: “How do we best address some students’ fears that an explicitly feminist paradigm could alienate survivors and thus make RASAN less effective?”

Says Greg Mitchell, assistant professor of women’s, gender and sexuality studies, the days of a “monolithic, white feminism” are over. “Race, ethnicity, disability, immigrant status, class” all need to be accounted for in the work to end sexual violence, he says.

The courses Mitchell teaches and his research, which includes the marginalization of sex workers during global sporting events such as the World Cup, regularly contend with sexual violence.

“I want students to consider the political economy of sexual assault,” he says. “How does this play out? How is this influenced in terms of how rape culture is perpetuated and how it becomes invisible?”

Because of the nature of the material they’re covering, Mitchell tells students to let him know if particular content might upset them. “Anything can be triggering—the clink of a glass, the smell of wet dog,” he says. “Students need to understand what to do if they find themselves experiencing an undue amount of stress. It’s always OK to get up and leave, use the bathroom and splash water on their face, or just to leave and not come back. Whatever sort of self-care they need to practice, it’s fine, and nobody needs to know why.”

## The Survivors

Paula Mejia ’17 came to Williams a survivor, having been raped her sophomore year of high school. One night during her entry’s weekly gathering for Sunday-night snacks, someone made a joke about rape. Everyone laughed, she says, including her JA. “I felt like there was no space for me in the community,” Mejia says. “I couldn’t imagine being at Williams for four years the way it was my fall semester.”

After winter break, she met with Mitchell, with whom she’d taken two classes, to talk about transferring. He suggested that instead she join women’s rugby, which he knew to be a supportive space.

Mejia says being part of the team has allowed her to “claim space” at Williams where she feels supported and understood. “I like my classes,” she says. “I love my professors. I love the women’s rugby team. But you don’t want to insulate yourself to the extent that you’re preaching to the choir when you talk about these issues.”

For many survivors of sexual assault, reclaiming space in such a small community can be difficult and traumatic. “That feeling of losing your place in the institution is very powerful,” President Falk says.

It may take years before the trauma overtly affects someone’s life. “That’s one of the challenges students reflect to us,” says Dean Bolton. “Often, they initially don’t report or connect to resources because their hope is that it will fade and each day will be easier than the last, but things come back around.”



Medina Mody-Fitzmaurice '15

Norma Rodriguez '18

Gabriella Kallas '16

Lei Brutus '16

Sally Waters '17



The first student to pursue a case through Williams' newly updated disciplinary process shared her story but asked not to be named. She says she was assaulted in September 2013 but was afraid to come forward because many of her close friends were also friends of the attacker. By spring, she says she began experiencing post-traumatic stress and other psychological effects of the assault. Her attacker was off-campus that semester for an unrelated reason, and a friend suggested that if she didn't want him to return in the fall, she could report the assault to the dean's office. The next day, she met with Bolton. The perpetrator was ultimately found to have violated the Code of Conduct and was removed from campus for a period of time with which the survivor was comfortable.

While parts of her reporting experience re-traumatized her, she says she appreciates the support she received. She credits, in addition to administrators, her SASS advocate and several professors for helping her through such a difficult time.

"I wouldn't discourage anyone from reporting, because I am happy to reclaim my space at Williams," she says. "If I hadn't reported, I wouldn't feel safe on campus. I feel so much safer now."

Creating emotional safety is important, says Bossong. "Trauma disconnects people from their own bodies, networks and life in the community. Reconnection is delicate and takes time. It has clinical value in terms of the physiological impact of trauma on the body," she says. "And it has value in terms of making sure people are feeling they can bring their full selves to the community, acknowledged for the parts of themselves that have been harmed."

## The Alumni

Last spring, a former Williams student—the daughter of two alumni who graduated in the 1980s—went public with her experience of sexual assault on campus and her account of the college's handling of her report of the assault. The story made national news and provoked many alumni to ask questions about Williams' policies, its handling of that case and how sexual assault could happen here at all.

On campus, the collaborative, long-standing work of students, faculty and staff was well known, but most alumni weren't aware of it. Many were frustrated by the college's inability to respond to questions about the specific case—both because the college makes a commitment to students to maintain their privacy and because federal law requires confidentiality. Alumni wanted to know that Williams was doing all it could to rid the campus of sexual violence, and many of them wanted to help.

In the wake of that spring, in an effort to connect alumni support to the campus work, the Executive Committee of the Society of Alumni formed the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Liaison Committee, led by Leila Jere '91.

"We as alumni all have different experiences and views of Williams, based partly on when we graduated," says Jere, president of the Society of Alumni. "But what we should really be focused on is Williams today."

The liaison group includes a dozen alumni who convene regularly by phone and bring relevant expertise from counseling, activism and the legal field. Their goal, Jere says, is to support the college in its work while



Valeria Pelayo '16



Rick Spalding,  
Chaplain to the College

Carolyn Miles,  
Associate Director of  
Student Athlete Services

Justin Adkins,  
Assistant Director of Gender,  
Sexuality and Activism,  
Davis Center

## [ STUDENT AFFAIRS ]

keeping alumni informed. To that end, the liaison group launched a website (<http://bit.ly/Liaisoncommittee>) for alumni in December.

Among the committee members are activist Tracey Vitchers '10, director of development and operations at Sexual Health Innovations, which recently developed a third-party sexual assault recording and reporting system for college campuses; Betsy Paine '85, a staff attorney for a New Hampshire child advocate program who has spent her career prosecuting cases, working on policies and training court staff on issues related to sexual violence; and Peter Ruggiero '88, a college writing instructor who volunteers for the nonprofit Male Survivor.

Ruggiero, himself a survivor, says, "Sexual violence is about power, the notion that one can have what one wants at any time, including the right to other people's bodies, without considering the consequences to others. I want to help other people heal—all victims, but also adding the voice of male survivors so that men who've been abused, sexually assaulted or raped can come forward in the healing process. We want Williams to be a safe environment for everybody."

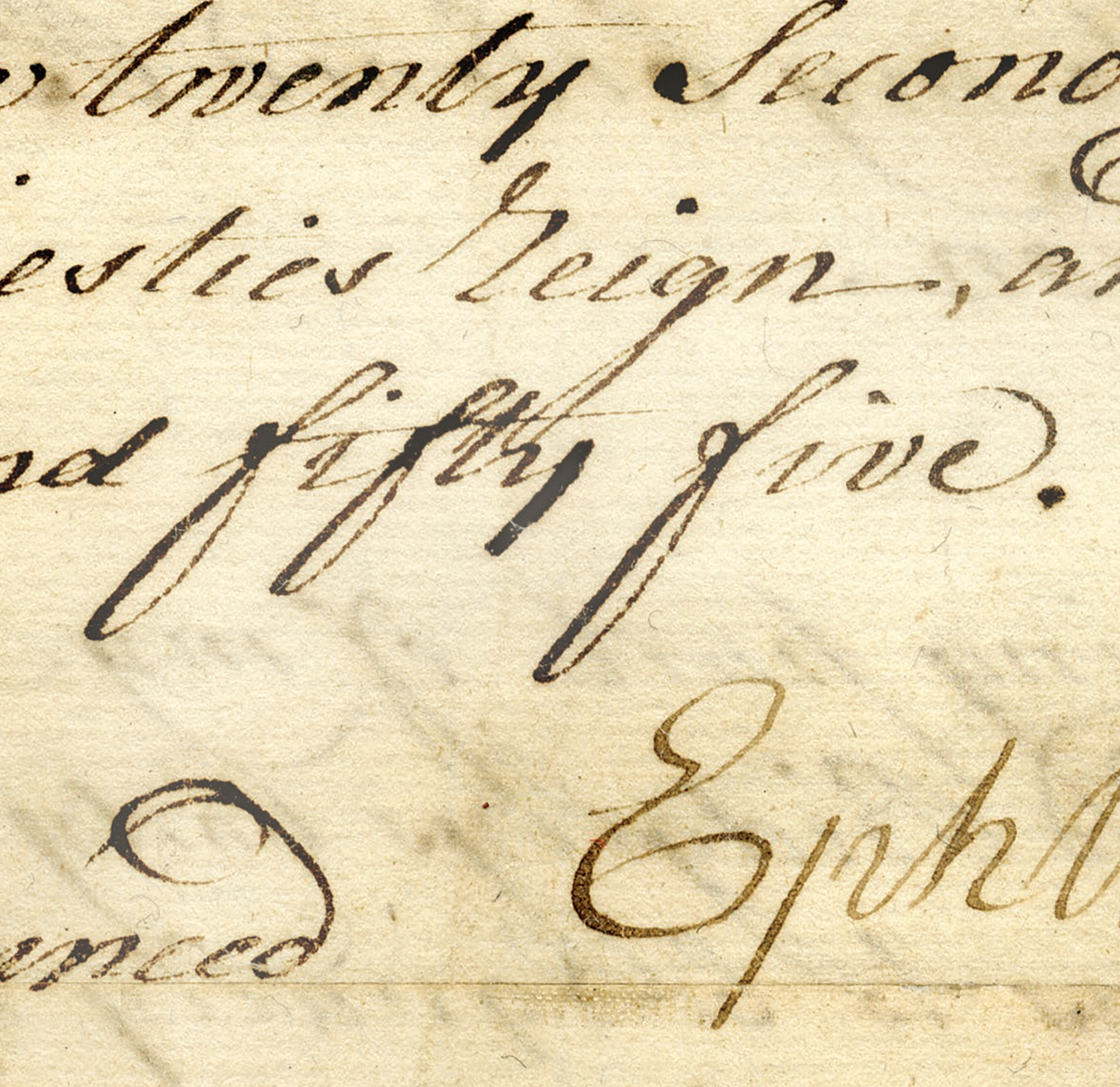
Everyone agrees there's much more work to be done. Sexual assault is devastating to individuals and to the community—at Williams and everywhere.

"College is a time, developmentally, when people are learning how to have ownership over their own individual lives and how to be part of larger groups," Bossong says. "It would be really easy to grab onto campus sexual violence as an issue. ... But I don't want to focus so intensively on what's happening here at Williams that we lose sight of the fact that it's actually part of a larger conversation."

*Caroline Rothstein is a New York City-based writer, performer, advocate and educator. She's been touring the U.S. performing spoken-word poetry and facilitating workshops at colleges, schools and performance venues for more than a decade, and her writing has appeared in Narratively, The Jewish Daily Forward, BuzzFeed and elsewhere. She is a survivor of sexual assault and an activist for ending sexual violence worldwide.*

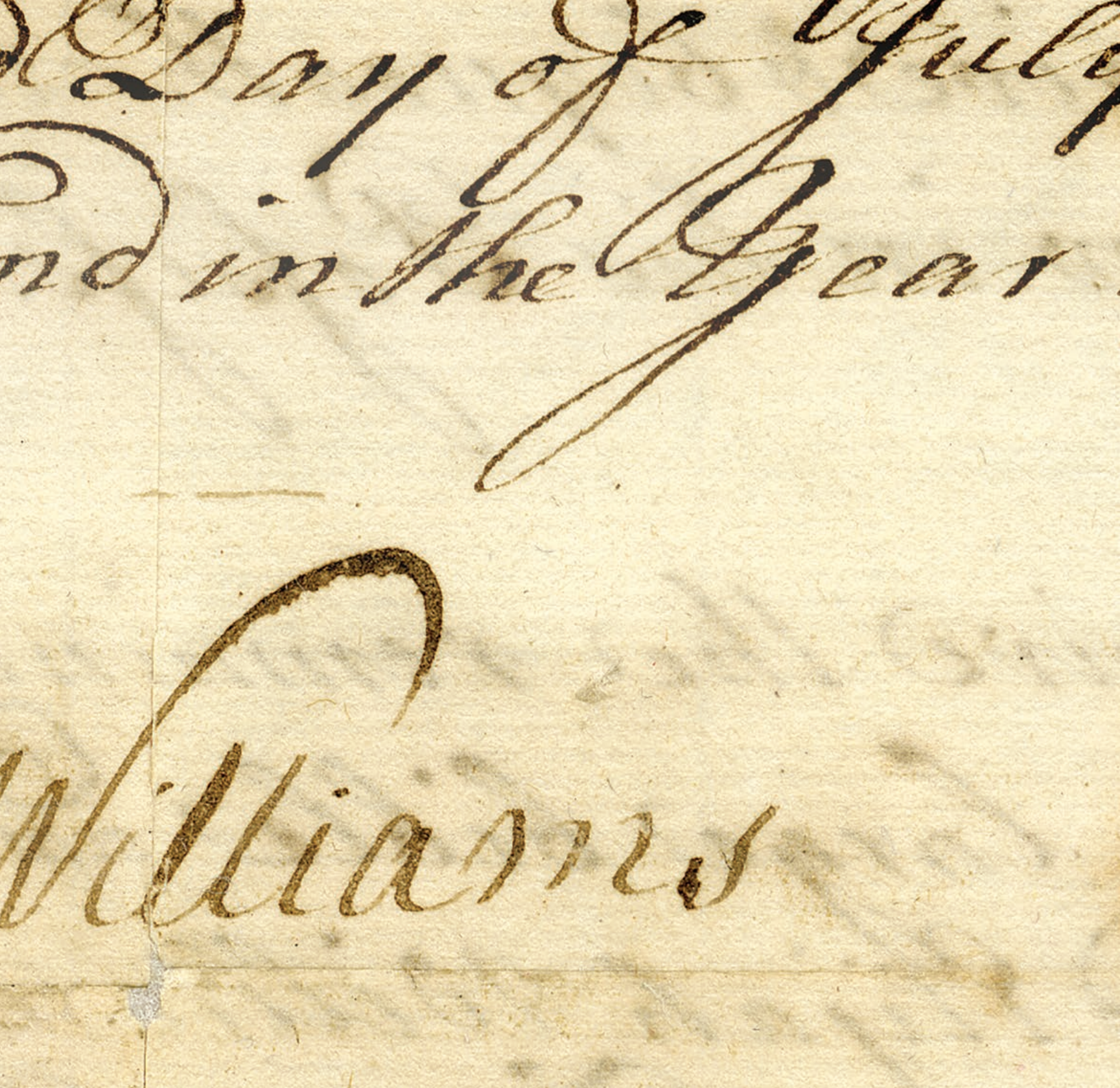
► For information on prevention and support for survivors and their loved ones, visit [www.cultureofrespect.org](http://www.cultureofrespect.org), an organization founded by two Williams parents with initial and ongoing support from Williams College, to provide frameworks to schools to assess and strengthen their efforts to eliminate sexual assault on campus. **Additional resources:** End Rape On Campus: [www.endrapeoncampus.org](http://www.endrapeoncampus.org), Know Your IX: [www.knowyourix.org](http://www.knowyourix.org), Male Survivor: [www.malesurvivor.org](http://www.malesurvivor.org), Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network: [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org), Students Active For Ending Rape: [www.safercampus.org](http://www.safercampus.org) and The Trevor Project: [www.trevorproject.org](http://www.trevorproject.org).





The 300th birthday of college founder Ephraim Williams on March 7 was a time of celebration—and also reflection. At various moments in February and March, the campus community gathered to examine his legacy and the implications of his will, which, upon its execution, provided \$11,000 for the “Support and maintenance of a free School (in a township





west of fort Massachusetts, Commonly Called the west township) for Ever.” A service of celebration was held in Williams’ honor in Thompson Memorial Chapel to reflect on the importance of thankfulness and giving. And, yes, there were birthday cakes and fireworks. Find out more about the college’s founder—and its founding—at <http://bit.ly/ephfounder>.



# DISPATCH FROM THE HOT ZONE

by Caroline Kettlewell '84



PHOTO COURTESY HERNANDO GARZON '34



DURING THE WORST EBOLA EPIDEMIC IN HISTORY, EPHS TRAVELED TO THE FRONT LINES TO LEND A HAND.

Garrett Ingoglia '92 has witnessed the broad spectrum of human suffering and loss in the course of a decade-plus career working in humanitarian relief and disaster response and recovery. But when he headed to Liberia last fall into the midst of a raging Ebola epidemic, he encountered a fear that he could only describe as existential.

“When we got on the ground, it was just ramping up to the height of the crisis,” he says. “Infection was increasing at an exponential rate.” The question on everyone’s minds, Ingoglia says, was: “Is this ever going to stop?”

As vice president of emergency response for the humanitarian-aid nonprofit AmeriCares, Ingoglia was in West Africa to lead the development, coordination and implementation of an Ebola-response strategy for his organization. He was one of several Ephs who have been part of the fight against the worst Ebola outbreak in history. Emergency physician Hernando Garzon '84 deployed with the International Medical Corps to help establish treatment centers and train health care workers in Sierra Leone. Physician-turned-journalist Richard Besser '81, an infectious-disease specialist, reported for ABC News from several regions in the hot zone on just how serious the epidemic had become. And as director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Food for Peace, Dina Esposito '83 oversaw her office’s efforts to help battle a hunger crisis—touched off by the social and economic disruptions of Ebola—that would threaten more than a million West Africans.

All played a part in the extraordinary international effort to chase a deadly, untreatable virus that had spun frighteningly out of control.

Garrett Ingoglia '92 AMERICARES





**IN DECEMBER 2013, A TODDLER DIED** in a remote village in the West African country of Guinea. He came to be known as Patient Zero. Soon after, his sister, mother and grandmother died from the same illness. Then someone from another village, who attended the grandmother's funeral, died. Next came the deaths of a health care worker who had treated the mourner and a doctor in another town who had treated the health care worker.

By March 2014, 29 people had died, and the World Health Organization (WHO) issued an official declaration: Ebola haemorrhagic fever—a highly infectious disease transmitted

Some hospitals and clinics shut down. People were dying in the streets. By early fall, the WHO was projecting the possibility of as many as 1.4 million new cases by the beginning of 2015.

“Past Ebola outbreaks burned themselves out quickly,” says Ingoglia. “This time it was different, and the international community realized we were really behind. We deployed in September and were arriving just as everyone else was.”

Ingoglia planned to spend two weeks in Liberia. He ended up staying for 10.



PHOTOS COURTESY HERNANDO GARZON '84

through contact with the bodily fluids and secretions of the sick and the dead—had broken out in West Africa.

Months passed before the international community, which viewed the outbreak as a regional issue, stepped in to help. As a *New York Times* editorial board wrote in June 2014: “The afflicted nations and their neighbors will need to redouble their efforts to contain a virus for which there is neither a cure nor a vaccine.”

Then in a few short weeks over the summer, the outbreak flamed into an epidemic. More than 100 new cases were being reported each week, then more than 300 per week, then 600. During the worst previous Ebola outbreak—the first officially recognized occurrence of the disease, in 1976—a few hundred people died. Now thousands were ill, and infections were burning through families and communities, flaring up in crowded cities and racing ahead of efforts to track or contain them.

There is no cure or treatment for Ebola. At best, IV fluids and supportive care can be used to try to keep patients alive long enough for their immune systems to fight the disease. In the face of a flood of gravely ill patients, however, the region's under-resourced health care system was quickly overwhelmed. Doctors and nurses were becoming sick.

**AS HEAD OF AMERICARES' PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY** department, Ingoglia determined his organization's response to the Ebola crisis. Though AmeriCares was already providing supplies and funding to local partners in West Africa, the decision was made to travel to Liberia in September to better assess the situation there.

“We decided we needed to get information that we could only get on the ground,” Ingoglia says. After many discussions within his organization about the possible risks, it was determined that participation would be voluntary. “It's the only time I've deployed when so many friends and family expressed concern about it.”

Once the team landed in West Africa, Ingoglia held a variety of coordinating meetings and visited existing treatment centers and health care facilities. Ingoglia identified clinics and hospitals that AmeriCares could partner with to provide supplies and funding, and his organization teamed with the International Office for Migration to establish and run three Ebola treatment units with a capacity of 50 patients each.

Arriving several weeks after Ingoglia, Garzon, an emergency medical physician in Davis, Calif., and director of Kaiser Permanente



health system's Global Health Program, deployed with International Medical Corps (IMC) to lead a volunteer team. Before recruiting others, Garzon says he thought hard about the implications: "Could I ethically ask people to step into treatment units and put themselves at risk? I did a lot of reading and had a lot of conversations to understand exactly what those risks would be."

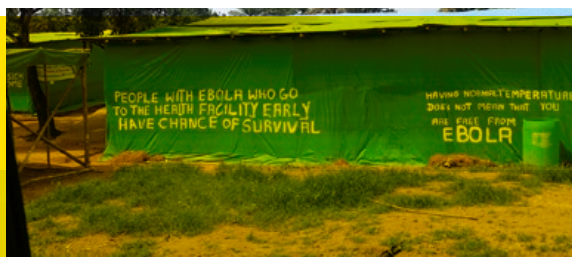
Out of risk assessment came strict protocols. Before setting up two new treatment units in Sierra Leone, Garzon spent several days observing an existing IMC facility in Liberia. His team developed an extensive training program for patient care and treatment protocols—

For Garzon, the precautions created social isolation unlike anything he'd ever encountered. He's responded to more than 20 crises in two-plus decades of disaster and human relief work, including the bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City, hurricanes on the East Coast, floods in California, a tsunami in Sri Lanka, civil unrest in Kenya, famine in Somalia and earthquakes in Haiti, Pakistan and Peru. But last fall was his first infectious-disease outbreak.

"Even in crumbled Port au Prince, after the earthquake, if there was a restaurant still standing we'd go in and grab a meal sometimes," Garzon says.



PHOTO COURTESY AMERICARES



TRYING TO CARE FOR NOT SURVIVE." HERNANDO GARZON '84



Hernando Garzon '84 KAISER PERMANENTE ▲

both to protect the health care workers and to boost the numbers of highly skilled responders. By December, the two new treatment units were fully operational, and more than 150 participants had completed the training.

Says Ingoglia, "Doctors and nurses can't step off the plane and start treating Ebola. People do more training than treating, because the infection-control procedures are very regimented and very precise."

Entering Ebola wards requires a lengthy and carefully monitored process of suiting up in personal protection (PP) equipment until no skin is showing. The multiple layers of gloves, gowns, hoods, masks, goggles and boots are hot and unwieldy, making it difficult to conduct even simple procedures. Gloves make hands and fingers clumsy, masks fog up, and conversation is muffled. Even more care must be taken in removing PP gear after exiting the ward. But the protocols are inviolable.

"A lot of the medical professionals expressed how difficult it was," Ingoglia says. "If you're not in your PP gear, if you haven't gone through the protocols needed to enter the hot zone, you can be five feet from someone who is crashing, and you can't do anything."

But in the Ebola zone, there was no casual engagement with the local community, no visiting of markets or restaurants. Team members stayed one to a room. Shaking hands was off-limits, and there were hand-washing stations everywhere.

"Everyone seems to carry waterless hand sanitizer," Garzon wrote in his first blog post for Kaiser Permanente in October. "It's quite possible that my hands have never been as clean as they are now."

Ingoglia, who traveled to the Philippines in the wake of 2013's Typhoon Haiyan and, the year before that, joined relief efforts after Superstorm Sandy devastated communities up and down the U.S. East Coast, says that in Liberia, "People were taking your temperature everywhere you went." Schools were closed. Taxis stopped running. "Then you'd go to a health facility," he says. "You'd see a big hospital that was essentially closed, or go to a treatment center, and the people would talk about everyone who had died."

Says Garzon, "It's sobering to have such a high percentage—65 or 70 percent of the people you are trying to care for—not survive. That is the highest mortality rate of any work I have done."



**“I THINK IF YOU GO INTO A COUNTRY IN THE MIDST OF THE WORST EBOLA EPIDEMIC IN HISTORY** and you are not at some level frightened, there is something wrong,” says Richard Besser '81.

As chief health and medical editor for ABC News, Besser arrived in Liberia in late August, the first correspondent from a major American TV network on the ground anywhere in the hot zone.

He was ideally qualified for this story. Besser had always been interested in global health. As a medical student, he worked at a mission clinic in the Himalayas. He had extensive experience in investigative epidemiology, including working as a “disease detective” at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which took him to a cholera outbreak in South America, among other assignments. He spent four years running emergency preparedness and response for the CDC and then assumed the role of acting director just before the H1N1 influenza outbreak.

“Ebola in West Africa hit my sweet spot as an outbreak investigator, investigative epidemiologist and TV communicator,” he says.

Besser was on the air constantly during the 10 days he initially spent in Liberia. “I was reporting on BBC, on Australian TV, blogging, hosting Facebook and Twitter chats,” he says. “I was on *Inside Edition*, an entertainment show.”

He demonstrated on camera the lengthy steps required to gown up in personal protective equipment, and he was the first journalist allowed to enter a treatment ward. He spoke of the desperately ill patients he saw there, but also of the ones who had survived. “For me,” Besser says, “it was a chance to make something happening in West Africa real and relevant to people in America.”

Then Ebola came to the U.S. Eric Duncan, a Liberian citizen visiting family in Texas, was the first person ever to be diagnosed with the disease and die on American soil. Two of the nurses who treated Duncan in Dallas developed Ebola soon after. Then physician Craig Spencer was diagnosed in New York City after returning from the hot zone.

When the news of Duncan's diagnosis broke at the end of September, Besser was in Liberia for a second trip to report on international response efforts. Suddenly, “the focus shifted from Ebola in West Africa to Ebola in America,” he says.

Now Besser was hunting down Duncan's story, explaining how Ebola traveled from West Africa to the U.S. Even more important, he offered a reassuring voice of calm and reason as Americans, anxiously watching coverage of hazmat-suited cleanup teams entering patients' apartments in Texas, were introduced to terms like “contact tracing” and “21-day monitoring.”

It was a stark reminder that the world was, indeed, shrinking.

“Ebola is a classic case that what happens in very far away places does come home to the U.S.,” says USAID's Dina Esposito '83.

**BY LATE WINTER, THERE WERE POSITIVE SIGNS THAT THE EBOLA OUTBREAK WAS BEING BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL.** The number of new cases reported each week seemed to be leveling off or declining, there were more treatment centers than only a few months earlier, and schools were reopening.



COUNTER-CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: PHOTOS COURTESY RICHARD BESSER '81 (FIRST THREE), HERNANDO GARZON '84, AND DINA ESPOSITO '83.





▲ Dina Esposito '83 (second from left) USAID OFFICE OF FOOD FOR PEACE



“FOR ME, IT  
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RICHARD BESSER '81

The crisis, however, was far from over. “You have to get to zero cases,” says Ingoglia. “And then Ebola won’t be over until the entire region is Ebola-free for 42 days.”

It’s entirely possible this outbreak might not be eradicated. But an even bigger risk, Ingoglia says, is that “Ebola gets under control eventually, and the world pats itself on the back and goes home”—even though there is still much more work to be done.

West Africa had long been vulnerable to a humanitarian disaster. The region was poor and under-resourced, with inadequate access to even basic health care. Both Liberia and Sierra Leone were struggling to recover from years-long civil wars.

Today, since the Ebola epidemic, West Africa is even more vulnerable. Economic losses alone are likely to measure in the billions; a January report from the World Bank concluded that the crisis would continue to “cripple” the economies of the three hardest-hit countries: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Nearly 22,000 people have fallen ill, and more than 8,500—including some 500 health care workers—have died. Families have been destroyed, communities devastated, countless children orphaned.

Ingoglia says that AmeriCares plans to “evolve its role” in the region, transitioning from crisis intervention to helping communities rebuild and strengthen in the long term. Meanwhile, Esposito’s Office of Food for Peace is supporting immediate hunger relief and helping lay the groundwork to allow the food and market systems to begin functioning again. In the long term, the office will focus on sustaining and building the nutritional health of the region’s people, particularly its children.

In two decades with USAID and an NGO called Pact—often working in Africa—Esposito has witnessed the brutal toll of hunger in the wake of wars, civil unrest, earthquakes and megastorms. Her first major humanitarian crisis was the 1991-92 famine in Somalia. Since joining the Office of Food for Peace as director in 2010, overseeing \$2.1 billion annually in food-assistance programming that spans 54 countries, she’s been involved with the Philippines typhoon, conflicts in Syria, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, and a subsequent famine in Somalia.

While famines tend to rivet world attention, she says, chronic hunger and malnutrition set the stage for epidemics like Ebola to wreak havoc. “Malnutrition makes people very vulnerable to other health problems,” says Esposito. “In places like West Africa, which is chronically food insecure, populations are very likely to get ill, and death occurs quickly.”

Better preparing communities to withstand emergencies—by addressing food insecurity, inadequate health care or lack of access to education, clean water and freedom from violence—is the growing focus of humanitarian-relief work in the 21st century.

“Helping communities become more resilient—that is our next big opportunity,” says Garzon. And if there is a lesson to be learned from the first Ebola outbreak to cross oceans, says Ingoglia, it’s this: “We are in a global community, and our fates are all intertwined.”

CAROLINE KETTLEWELL '84 IS A FREELANCE WRITER BASED IN RICHMOND, VA.



A photograph of a man and a woman in a workshop. The woman, on the left, is standing with her arms crossed, wearing a red blazer, a white patterned top, dark pants, and brown boots. The man, on the right, is sitting on a black stool, wearing a brown sweater, dark pants, and brown boots. He has his hands clasped in his lap. The background shows a workshop with workbenches, stools, and shelves filled with various items. The floor is polished concrete.

# THE ITALIAN JOB



WITH THE HELP OF ART MAJOR GRACE MCENIRY '12, E.J. JOHNSON '59  
DISCOVERS THE ARCHITECT BEHIND A FAMOUS, TEMPORARY THEATER BUILT IN THE  
16TH CENTURY TO CELEBRATE FRANCE'S NEW KING AND HIS ITALIAN QUEEN.

by Abe Loomis



In the light-filled architecture studio on the second floor of Spencer Studio Art building, Grace McEniry '12 spent the Winter Study of her senior year hunched over a drafting table, painstakingly recreating a vanished Italianate theater from 16th-century France.

Working from centuries-old descriptions, she drew an architectural facsimile that would eventually prove critical in Professor E.J. Johnson's quest to solve a historical mystery: Who designed the temporary structure that played a starring role in the 1548 celebration of Henry II's royal entrance into Lyon, France, with his new wife, Italy's Catherine de' Medici?

"Never have I collaborated with a student to this degree, where the outcome of an article actually depended on what the student did," says Johnson, the college's Amos Lawrence Professor of Art, whose book *Inventing the Opera House: Theater Architecture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, currently under review by a major university press, contains a chapter based on his and McEniry's work.

For McEniry, an art major, the task was an ideal combination of art history and practice. "All the other architectural projects I've worked on have been contemporary designs, schemes meant to be situated in today's world," she says. "This was particularly interesting because it allowed me to directly relate contemporary studio practice with architecture from the 16th century."

Johnson became intrigued by the mysterious theater in the course of researching his book, which explores the architecture of theaters in Italy in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. Although the structure had been built in France, it was clearly the work of Italian architects and

builders. "It was an Italian job," Johnson says; as such, it belonged in the book. Yet the theater's designer was unknown, and no drawings of the original building survived.

Johnson started digging and soon found a contemporary account of the theater written by an Italian identified only as "F.M." and reprinted by a British scholar. As he worked to translate the document from 16th-century Italian into modern English, Johnson noticed that the recorded measurements were unusually precise, and he wondered if perhaps there were enough data to create a reasonably accurate replica.

"Reconstructions are tricky," he says. "You can't necessarily trust them. But if you've got that much information, you can do something reasonable. I wanted to see what it looked like. But since I couldn't draw it, I had to find someone who could."

Enter McEniry.

When a teaching assistant withdrew from Johnson's legendary Art History 101 course, McEniry was tapped for the job. "The head TA called me and said, 'Are you still an art major?'" McEniry says. "I said, 'Yes!'"

Johnson and McEniry hadn't met before. "It was entirely lucky," Johnson says. "Then I found out that Grace was an art history and practice major, which suggested that she knew how to draw. We got to talking."

Their conversation led to a proposal for an independent project, and, with the enthusiastic approval of the Winter Study program committee, McEniry was soon immersed in the 16th century, studying a temporary theater designed to ease the introduction of an Italian-born queen to her skeptical French subjects.

"The point of this theater, in good part, was to raise the status of Catherine de' Medici, because the French were not happy to have the descendant of a banker as their queen," Johnson says.

Although the Medicis were rich and powerful, controlling Florence and much of Italy, their bloodline—in the status-obsessed milieu of 16th-century Europe—was considered questionable. To bolster Catherine's aristocratic credentials, the theater's architect included statues representing the great figures of Tuscan



literature, including Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. Opposite these stood a squadron of warriors and rulers, including Catherine's father, Lorenzo, the Duke of Urbino. Painted female figures—representing Tuscan cities under Medici control—flanked by many-colored dragons with torches affixed to their fiery tongues further burnished Catherine's status as the member of a ruling family that by that time had produced two popes.

McEniry and Johnson met regularly throughout Winter Study to compare notes. And when the drawings were complete, Johnson was deeply impressed by McEniry's accomplishment. It was clear from the drawings that the theater was the work of a skilled architect, yet Johnson was still baffled about the identity of the designer.

"Once I saw what the theater looked like, I realized it was good," Johnson says. "It wasn't a piece of junk. It was designed by somebody who knew what they were doing."

With McEniry's drawings in hand, Johnson began to sift through countless images in architectural studies and manuscripts. One picture leaped out: a photograph of Le Château d'Ancy-le-Franc in Burgundy, designed by a Bolognese architect named Sebastiano Serlio.

"At first, Serlio seemed too easy," Johnson says. "And his name isn't mentioned in any of the accounts, which I attribute to the fact that he was not Florentine." The only two artists mentioned in the documents were both Florentines—a visiting sculptor and a painter who lived in France. But there was no evidence that either had ever designed a building, and the designer's touch was too deft; it appeared to be the work of an expert.

"Fortunately," Johnson says, "there's a wonderful and exhaustive monograph by a German scholar on Serlio, which has been translated into English, and it was filled with information and illustrated with all of his work."

Born in 1475, Serlio was a seasoned architect who had designed the Château d'Ancy and other structures for private commissions. He published several notable books on architecture, including one that

features a Roman triumphal arch echoed in the design of the mystery theater. Serlio also had a long-standing connection to the theater's primary patron, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, the Archbishop of Lyon.

D'Este was the son of Lucrezia Borgia and later made a famous contribution to Italian architectural history by building the Villa d'Este, with its storied gardens and fountains, at Tivoli, outside of Rome. He was also intimately involved with



every detail of the planning for Henry and Catherine's entry to Lyon, in which the temporary theater would figure prominently. Serlio's ties to the d'Este family were extensive; he'd designed a palace for d'Este at Fontainebleau, the Grand Ferrare. In fact, when plans for the royal entry were announced, Serlio was living on the top floor of the palace.

"When I learned that not only had Serlio designed the house for Cardinal d'Este but also that he and his family were actually living there at the time," Johnson says, "I thought, well, that's the clincher."

"There was nobody else connected with it," he adds. "He was the cardinal's architect. Once I had the drawings to go on, I could relate those to the buildings he had built and the designs he had published, and there was a kind of visual continuity among them all. The dates were all right. There was no competition. It had to be Serlio."

Johnson marshaled the evidence in a paper that he presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians last April. He also added the chapter about the temporary theater to *Inventing the Opera House*. His essay attributing the theater to Serlio, which is accompanied by McEniry's drawings, appeared in the 2014 issue of the international art journal *Artibus et Historiae*.

"When the article was accepted, the only request for a change was that the drawings be redone because they were too good," Johnson says. "I think they were afraid that people might think it was the real thing."

The editors weren't the only ones impressed by McEniry's skill. After graduation, she worked as an intern at a Colorado architecture firm for a couple of years, helping with production and research for campus-facility planning documents. She then applied to eight top architecture schools and was accepted to all of them. She chose Harvard Graduate School of Design and started coursework this past fall.

"I've been thinking about this project in relation to a theme we discussed a lot in school this past semester, which is how architectural history is codified or how architecture is remembered," she says. "When E.J. and I proposed these drawings as a possible visualization of the Lyon theater, we added a chapter to its history."

Johnson's collaborations continue. Most recently, he co-authored an article with Ranana Dine '16 presenting new information about Louis Kahn's 1973 dismissal as architect of a new synagogue for Mikveh Israel, one of Philadelphia's oldest Jewish congregations.

Still, the circumstances surrounding Johnson's work with McEniry seem extraordinary.

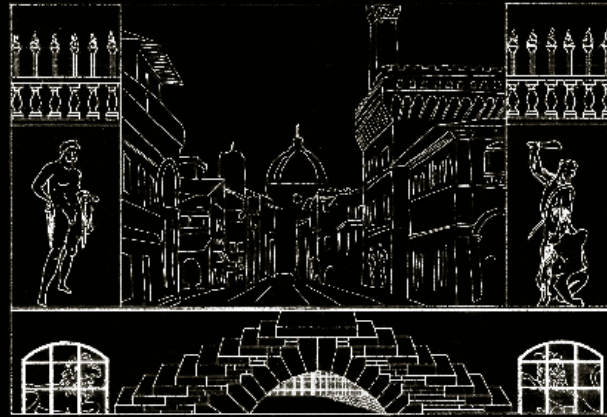
"The uniqueness about the collaboration with Grace was the way she took a verbal description and turned it into a convincing visual reconstruction," he says. "I would never have been able to do that, and most students, I would guess, would not have been able to do it either. She's remarkably competent and self-motivated. I was lucky."

ABE LOOMIS IS A FREELANCE WRITER BASED IN WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS.



“The point of this theater, in good part, was to raise the status of Catherine de’ Medici. ... The French were not happy to have the descendant of a banker as their queen.”

PROFESSOR E.J. JOHNSON '59





## Encountering the Original

February marked the 500th anniversary of the death of Aldus Manutius, a man considered by many to be the grandfather of the liberal arts. A Venetian scholar, teacher, editor and publisher, Aldus was the first to publish Aristotle in the original Greek, and he had a hand in determining which texts the scholars and students of his time would encounter.

The Chapin Library of Rare Books has upwards of 250 works from Aldus' publishing house. Among the larger collections of "Aldines" in this country, the Chapin has all of the press's important editions of the classics, including the first edition of Aristotle's *Opera*, the 1499 *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, considered the quintessential book of the Italian Renaissance, and a 1501 pocket-sized edition of Vergil's *Opera*.

Aldus was different from earlier publishers because he was, first and foremost, a scholar. "Printers before Aldus were metalsmiths and craftsmen," says classics professor Edan Dekel, who helped organize an exhibition of the Aldines at the Chapin as part of the yearlong Book Unbound initiative celebrating the dedication of Sawyer Library. "Aldus made books because he believed they were the center of every cultured person's life, because he believed having knowledge was essential."

When Aldus was a student and teacher in Italy, most scholarly works were available only as handwritten manuscripts. There were variations in tone and interpretation in each, and there weren't many copies in circulation.

The printing press allowed for both the standardization and the mass production of texts.

"As a scholar himself, Aldus chose to print those texts he knew scholars needed," says Robert Volz, custodian of the Chapin.

Says Dekel, who points to annotations made by an early owner in the margins of the Aristotle: "This is the lived book. It's the first link in a chain that culminates with our own students in the 21st century reading Aristotle and making notes in their own texts, then coming here to read the original."

The Aristotle is just over 12 inches tall and would have been expensive. But in 1501 Aldus introduced editions of important authors, such as Vergil, that were smaller and more affordable, made possible in part by a newly invented "italic" type. "Aldus ensured

that the texts he printed would enter the educational pipeline," Dekel says. "And in privileging certain texts, he helped form the foundation of Western thought, art and culture."

Just as Aldus broadened student access to the classics, Dekel says that, at Williams, "We privilege unmediated experience, asking students to encounter the original, be it the results of a scientific experiment in the laboratory or coming into the Chapin to read a first edition of Aristotle."

"These books represent the history of education and the study of the classical tradition," he adds. "They emphasize the interaction between scholarship, teaching, printing and publishing and a democratization of knowledge."

—Julia Munemo



► The exhibition "Aldus Manutius, Scholar, Printer, Publisher: A Quincentenary Celebration" is on view through March 20 in the Chapin Gallery.



## The Body as Book

During this year's Book Unbound initiative, at least one course hopes to "disrupt the idea that a book is a material object contained within a binding," says associate theater professor Amy Holzapfel.

In *The Body as Book*, a collaboration between the theater and dance departments, "We're asking what it means for the book to be embodied and alive," says Holzapfel, who is co-teaching the course this semester with Artist-in-Residence in Dance Erica Dankmeyer '91.

Holzapfel and Dankmeyer explain that dance and theater each channel, preserve and transmit stories, usually in distinct ways. "But these fields both communicate cultural memory through individual and collective bodies," Dankmeyer says. "We're highlighting the similarities, not the differences, because we're interested in the performative component of each discipline."

The course includes seminar-style classes on performance theory and studio classes that will have students

learning on their feet. Toward the end of the semester, the group will move into Sawyer Library, where they will work to create a performance piece about transmitting information via the body.

"We've been asking how memory is archived in our bodies," Holzapfel says. "The library is the perfect place to perform our final piece, because it archives the old and the new in one building."

For their final project, each of the 14 students—some who have taken dance classes, some who have taken theater classes and a few who already straddle both disciplines—will develop a way to archive the performance using any medium but video.

"Dance and theater are often defined as ephemeral," says Dankmeyer. "But repetition and re-enactment are forms of remembering, so performance is not what disappears but what remains in our memories."

—Julia Munemo

Erica Dankmeyer '91, Williams' Artist-in-Residence in Dance



PHOTO COURTESY 3800 DANCE COMPANY

## Answering Big Questions



Mathematics professor Satyan Devadoss has received a three-year, \$79,591 grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The organization seeks to give "great minds the space and resources to stretch their imaginations."

Devadoss' project, "Mathematics, Dualism and the Renaissance Revival," proposes to "break down walls between the physical and cerebral," he says. The project is divided into four parts and will produce a variety of written materials, including research articles and editorials; a new course curriculum for undergraduates; various public speaking engagements; and a possible book proposal.

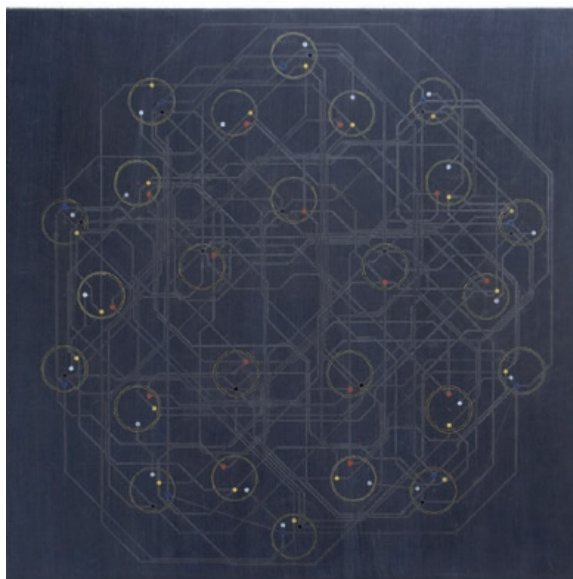
For one part of the project he is creating a new course in which origami techniques will be used to demonstrate the connections between art and mathematics. He also is continuing research that focuses on the shape of phylogenetic structures. Along those

lines, the exhibition "Cartography of Tree Space," a collaboration between Devadoss and visual artist Owen Schuh, inspired by the Renaissance ideal of "the fluidity between

the humanities and sciences," is on exhibit at Satellite Berlin through April.

Devadoss says this way of thinking—which merges academic concepts like math, biology and art in order to arrive at a greater understanding of all three—reinforces the goals of a liberal arts institution like Williams. "The fact that these notions are not just in your head, that they can be embodied, for me is a way to go back to the time of the Renaissance," he adds.

The Templeton Foundation funds research into the "basic forces, concepts and realities governing the universe and humankind's place in the universe." It's concerned with "bold ideas that cross disciplinary boundaries to engage the Big Questions."



Owen Schuh, 2014, graphite, oil and ink and acrylic on panel, 23 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 23 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (60 x 60 cm.).

► At left: An example of "Cartography of Tree Space," Satyan Devadoss' collaboration with visual artist Owen Schuh. More images are available at [www.satelliteberlin.org/pages/treespace](http://www.satelliteberlin.org/pages/treespace).



# Examining Freedom

PHOTO BY MARK MCCARTHY



Neil Roberts

The concept of freedom has been on Neil Roberts' mind for much of his academic career. Is it a state of being or an idea? Are humans born enslaved? How can we talk about freedom without talking about its opposite? And what, truly, is its opposite?

In *Freedom as Marronage* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), Roberts uses the experience of marooned communities, particularly groups of slaves who fled plantations in the Americas between the 16th and 19th centuries, to examine the idea of freedom and "to really shatter the conventional ways of how freedom is taught."

The associate professor of Africana studies says Western political theory presents the idea of freedom as "fixed"—you're free or you're not. But "there's something about our lived experience I really want to underscore."

Marronage, which traditionally refers to groups of slaves in various states of escape and survival, helps underscore it. The idea of flight—in this case, escaping "unfreedom" to exist in a community of other runaways—pushes against the notion that freedom is a finite state. "Flight for me is not simply physical," Roberts says. "It's cognitive, and it's structural."

Drawing on a wide variety of scholarly work ("Hannah Arendt and Samuel Taylor Coleridge don't usually get put in a book with the Haitian Revolution," he says), Roberts also covers cases where groups of people try to overturn the status quo. These cases frame freedom not as the physical act of escaping, but as a political movement. They ask the reader to consider the strengths and weaknesses of those who see their freedom through a vision for a new society or through the establishment of a new leader.

Roberts has been at Williams since 2008 and also teaches courses in political theory. He's written extensively about the way Caribbean, Continental and North American theories address the idea of freedom. He is co-editor of *Creolizing Rousseau* (2014) and editor of the series *Creolizing the Canon*, all published by Rowman & Littlefield. *Freedom as Marronage* is his first single-authored book.

## EXCERPT ▼

Marronage is a flight from the negative, subhuman realm of necessity, bondage and unfreedom toward the sphere of positive activity and human freedom. Flight is multidimensional, constant and never static. Negative and positive theorists overwhelmingly conceive of freedom as a stable condition. Negative formulations articulate stability as security against interference and domination. Positive ideals endorse a vision of freedom that agents can imagine arriving at, and they classify agents either as participators in the active life or as unfree. There is no consideration of the transitional space between unfreedom and freedom. Agency exists prior to and during a slave's dialectical



encounter with the stages of liberation and freedom. Agency is temporally fluid because of the political imaginary underlying it in the minds of the slave and the free. Modern Western theories of freedom obscure the degrees of agency and their relation to freedom due to their inattentiveness to the act of flight.

The concept of marronage is not anti-Western, but post-Western. *Post-* designates neither a comprehensive jettisoning of the past nor the bracketing of a particular intellectual tradition in favor of another. ... Western thought alone cannot explain flight emerging from the interstitial. ... By looking at the idea of marronage and then rethinking conceptualizations of freedom in Western theory through the marronage heuristic, we are able to use marronage as a tool applicable respectively to Western and non-Western thinkers and movements. Work critically integrating lived experience, slavery and slave agency highlights the stakes of uniting the negative and positive streams of thought on freedom.

## Other books



**The End of the Rainbow: How Educating for Happiness (Not Money) Would Transform Our Schools.** By Susan Engel,

Williams senior lecturer in psychology. The New Press, 2015. An alternative view of education, drawn from theory and classroom experience, in which happiness is the ultimate goal.



**From Joseph Bensman: Essays on Modern Society.** Edited by Robert Jackall, Williams' Willmott Family Third

Century Professor of Sociology & Public Affairs, and Duffy Graham '83. Newfound Press, 2014. A collection of essays by author and professor Joseph Bensman explores various topics of applied and humanistic sociology.



**Black Mosaic: The Politics of Black Pan-Ethnic Diversity.** By Candis Watts Smith, Williams assistant profes-

sor of political science. NYU Press, 2014. An examination, based on interviews and survey data, of how the influx of Afro-Latino, Afro-Caribbean and African immigrants to the U.S. is changing black identity and black politics.



**The Return of George Washington, 1783-1789.** By Edward J. Larson '74. Harper Collins, 2014. An exploration of the rarely

studied period when Washington saved the U.S. by coming out of retirement to lead the Constitutional Convention and serve as the nation's first president.

► Visit [ephsookshelf.williams.edu](http://ephsookshelf.williams.edu) to see more works by members of the Williams community and to submit new publications.



# Operations Research

Students in Steven J. Miller's Operations Research class spent last fall learning mathematical theories and computer science coding programs—and then applying those skills to problems in the community. “I wanted students to find out what happens when they use math in the real world, working with real people on real-life problems,” says Miller, associate professor of mathematics.

Each team took a complicated system and found ways to make it more efficient. One group looked at the local nonprofit Berkshire Rides’ driving routes, another evaluated the system of assigning first-year students to residence halls, and a third studied the class rotation schedule at Mount Greylock Regional School.

The Mount Greylock team distributed surveys to students and faculty and conducted interviews with school administrators. They analyzed the data to determine problems with the current schedule and to figure out what constraints to apply in order



to find possible solutions. They considered state mandates about hours spent in class and the number of school days per year. They also considered the school’s desires, such as maintaining the rotation of classes and making room for longer sessions.

The students presented seven model schedules to Mount Greylock Principal Mary MacDonald, who will share them with the faculty team charged with evaluating the school’s schedule every three to four years. “The options developed by the Williams students will support the faculty team’s decision-making,” she says.

—Julia Munemo

# Biography and Its Discontents

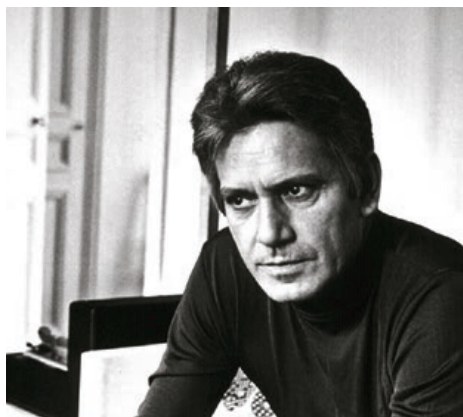
Jorge Semprún’s life was an open book. His substantial body of work—memoirs, fictional works and screenplays—drew heavily from his experiences growing up in exile, fighting in the French Resistance, surviving 18 months in a Nazi concentration camp and then working clandestinely from France to overthrow Spain’s military regime.

But to Soledad Fox, professor of Spanish and chair of Romance languages at Williams, it’s what Semprún chose not to reveal about his life that’s most interesting.

“He was an expert at self-fashioning,” says Fox, who’s at work on a biography of Semprún due out in 2016. “He was a novelist and memoirist, so he rightly took advantage of his artistic license.”

Fox is using extensive archival research and interviews (primarily from Russia, France and Spain) to “provide the larger context of his life,” including his tragic childhood and adolescence. His mother died when he was young, and a military coup forced the family—the father and seven children—from a comfortable, middle-class lifestyle in Madrid into exile under “brutal circumstances” in France, she says.

In his own stories, Semprún de-emphasized the “real suffering” of the first 22 years of his life, Fox says, “because he was macho. It was the 1940s, and there was this attitude of the stoic hero, the Humphrey Bogart in



Jorge Semprún in Paris, 1970

*Casablanca* type. But I find that focusing on the more personal aspects of his life makes him more sympathetic and adds real depth to his story.

“In a way, I am turning a feminine gaze on a male subject,” Fox says, by paying attention to the influence his mother and her death had on Semprún’s life. Fox is also focusing on other personal experiences and relationships that were crucial in shaping his political and artistic choices.

Fox’s biography, and her research and writing process, were the basis of her February talk “Biography and its Discontents,” part of the college’s annual Faculty Lecture Series. A spring-semester tradition that’s more than a century old, the series is an opportunity for

faculty members to present their scholarship to the campus and wider community.

Fox has written extensively about Semprún and teaches classes on his work. She’s also the author of the biography *Constancia De La Mora in War and Exile* and *Flaubert and Don Quixote: The Influence of Cervantes on Madame Bovary*. While the Flaubert book was written as a work of comparative literature, Fox says she now realizes it’s also biographical at heart. “I fell in love with reading Flaubert’s letters—there were close to 8,000 pages of correspondence,” she says. “I always want to know what’s going on behind the scenes.”

## OTHER FACULTY LECTURES THIS SPRING

**Sara Dubow '91**, associate professor of history:  
“‘A Constitutional Right Rendered Utterly Meaningless’: Religious Exemptions and Reproductive Politics, 1973-2014”

**Gage McWeeny**, associate professor of English:  
“Maximalism and the Novel”

**Steven J. Miller**, associate professor of mathematics:  
“Why the IRS Cares about the Riemann Zeta Function and Number Theory (and why you should, too!)”

**Mihai Stoiciu**, associate professor of mathematics:  
“Multidimensional Spaces and Their Mathematics: Matrices, Operators and Eigenvalues”



**Encode Data**

Phone Number   -

Correctable Errors: 1

“The only person that can decode it properly is you.

There’s no encryption here. The security is the exact same security that comes from memory.”

Brent Heeringa, computer science professor

## Memory, Encoded

What if you could safely keep your most important information in a database that could only be unlocked by your own memory? A web-based model developed by professors Brent Heeringa and Nate Kornell does just that.

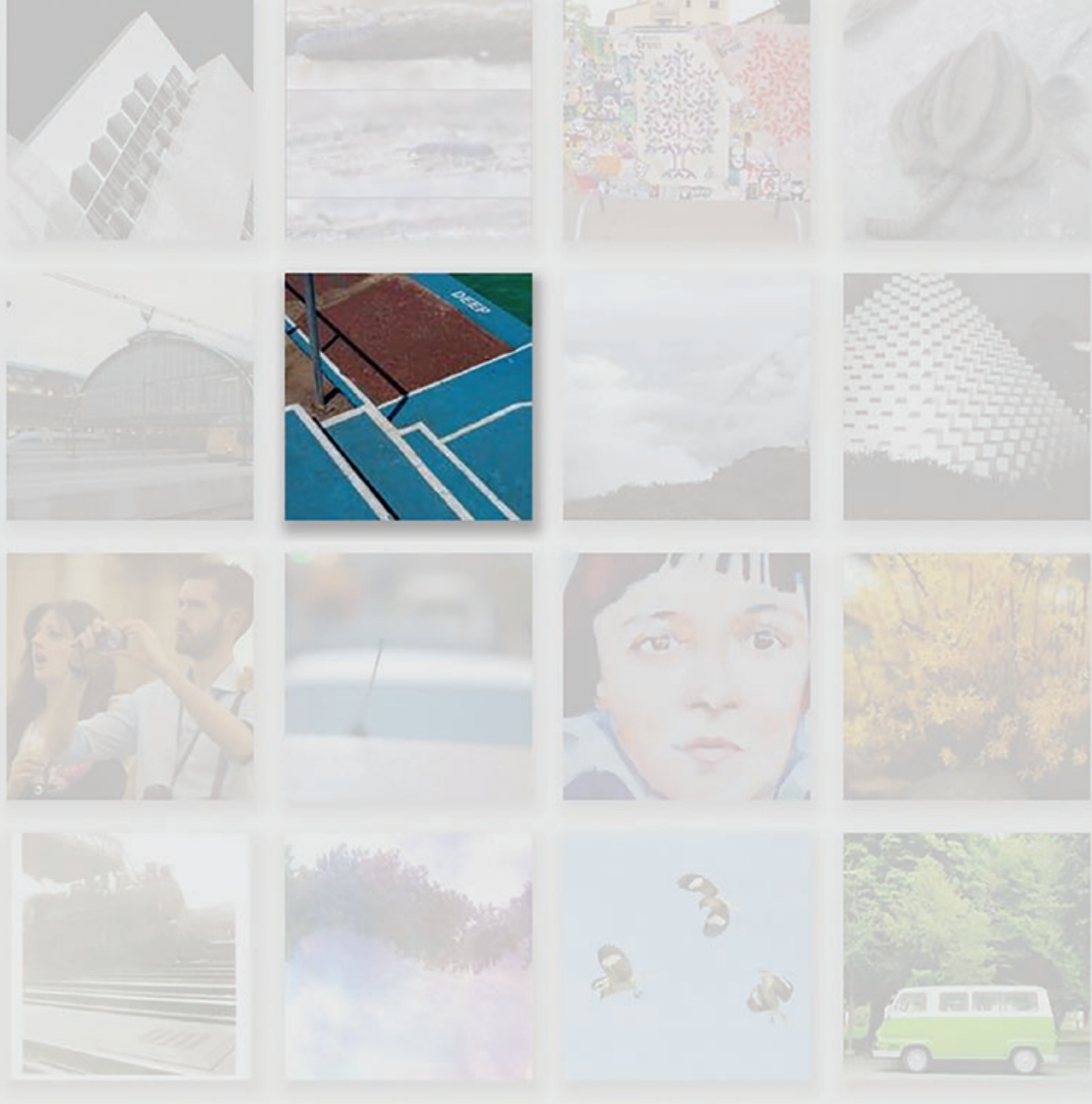
The model relies on the proven strength of the human ability to correctly recall a series of images. “I like to think of our system as providing sophisticated mnemonic tools to the average person,” says Heeringa, chair and associate professor of computer science.

The system works this way: A user visits the website and is prompted to enter his or her email address and a string of numbers—a phone number, a credit card or a social security number. The user then views a slideshow of photographs and types in a description, in her own words, of each image in the series. So she might label a rainy cityscape “umbrellas,” a stadium as

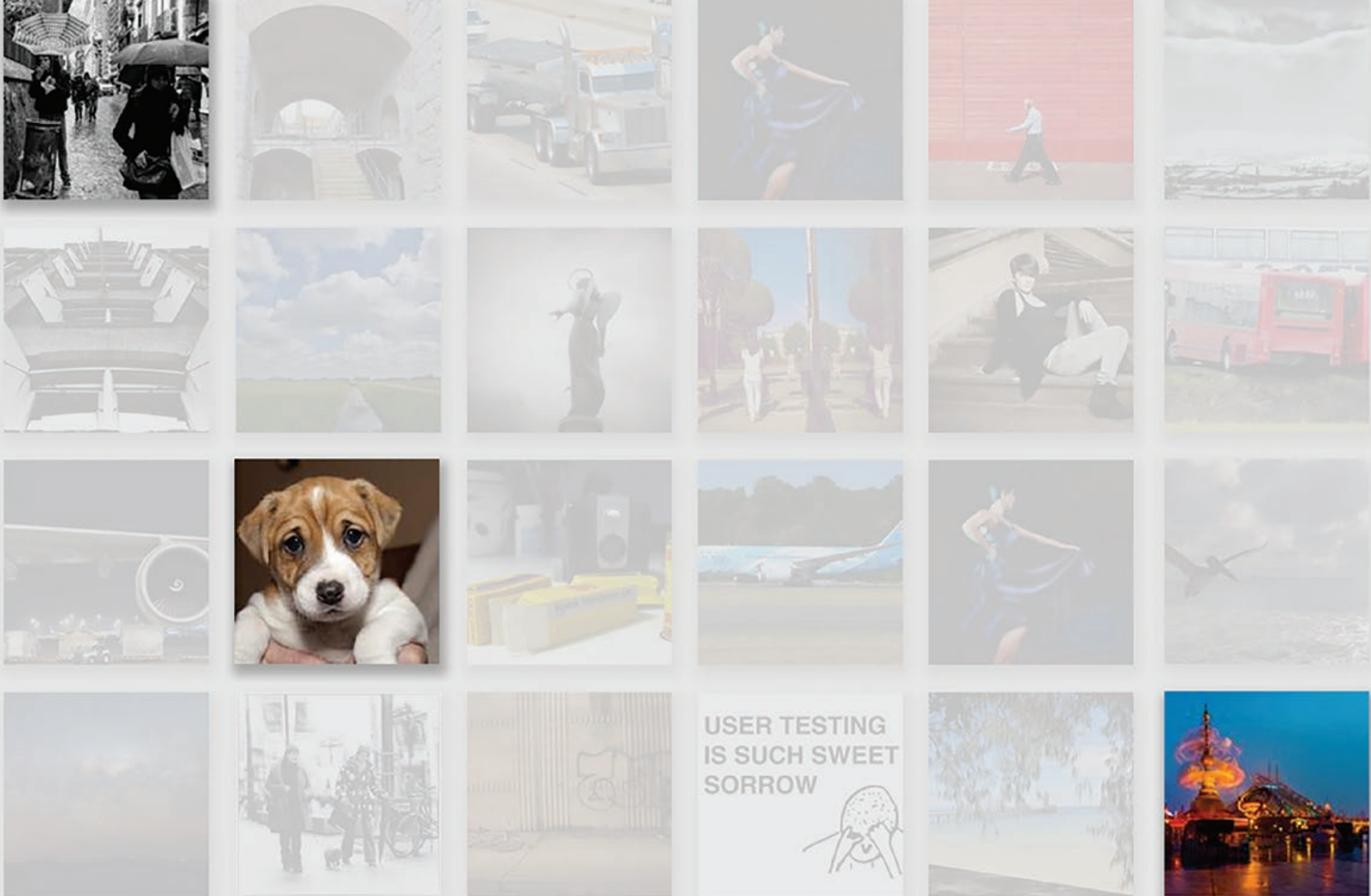
“football” and a brown and white puppy as “beagle.” The number of images labeled corresponds to the number of digits in the information she’s encoding.

To recall each number, the user is shown several images strung together in a row—new ones along with the one she labeled earlier. With each string of images, she is prompted to click on the one she remembers: the cityscape, the stadium, the puppy. If she selects all the correct images or all but one, the system reveals the number.

The beauty of the model is that there’s no way for hackers to crack the code. Even if they gain access to the information stored in the database, they’ll learn only that the images stored there each represent a different number or letter. “The only person that can decode it properly is you,” says Heeringa. “There’s no encryption here. The security is the exact same security that comes from memory.”







Years of memory research prove that visual cues are an effective tool to help recall information. Hundreds of years ago, monks used images to help them remember long passages of text, says Kornell, assistant professor of psychology. Award-winning memory experts use “memory palaces”—structures they “build” inside their minds that put stand-in objects and characters in different rooms—to accurately recall hundreds of numbers.

Those methods usually require a lot of concentration and training. But Heeringa and Kornell's model—which builds on the ideas of Andrew Drucker, a theoretical computer scientist completing a postdoc at the University of Edinburgh—puts the images right in front of a user.

“We’re taking the limitations of human memory,” Heeringa says, “and we’re playing to its strengths and avoiding its weaknesses.”

It's easy to envision a commercial application for the model. Imagine you're at your

home computer, about to make a purchase online, and you realize your credit card is in the kitchen, several rooms away. If you've purchased something from the retailer before and elected to save your card number, the website could prompt you with a series of images, including ones that only you would recognize. If you select the correct ones, you get your credit card number and save yourself a trip to the kitchen.

Preliminary tests of Heeringa and Kornell's model, conducted with help from students participating in the college's Summer Science Research Program, are encouraging. The researchers crowdsourced a pool of participants who were assigned randomly to one of three online experiments. They were asked to study 60, 80 or 100 images. Then they were asked to re-study them one, two or three times. The participants were tested after a week and again after a month. After a month's

time, the majority of participants in all the experiments correctly identified between 88 and 90 percent of the images.

Heeringa and Kornell have been working on the project for two years, and several students have made significant contributions. Brianne Mirecki '14 built the first recognition model and helped run the first series of experiments. Carson Eisenach '14 helped build the original working prototype. And Benno Stein '15 helped build the system's latest iteration.

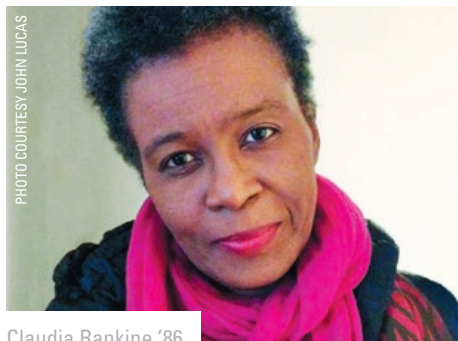
There's more to be done. The system must be tested in order to ensure it will be easy for people to use. And ease of use must be substantiated if the system has any chance of being shared with a wider audience.

"I know it's going to work," Heeringa says.  
"The question is, how well is it going to work?"

—*Francesca Shanks*

► Try the model here: <http://mindburnr.com>.





Claudia Rankine '86

Many writers of all backgrounds see the imagination ... as a generative place where race doesn't and shouldn't enter.

# The Racial Imaginary

By Claudia Rankine '86 and Beth Loffreda

In 2011, poet Claudia Rankine '86 put out an open call for letters discussing the creative imagination, creative writing and race. Responses were first posted online and have been collected into a publication due out in March titled *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind* (Fence Books), which Rankine co-edited with writer Beth Loffreda.

## An excerpt from the introduction of their new book follows:

Writing rests on the faith that there is something of value in witnessing an individual mind speaking in and to its ordinary history. And something valuable happens when a writer reflects on race in the making of creative work. And since race is one of the prime ways history thrives in us, it matters that each writer says her own thing.

But writers writing about race these days tend to invoke several tropes. *I met an other and it was hard!* That is lightly said, but at its essence are the anxious, entangling encounters that happen before anyone makes it to the page. *I needed to travel to "meet" race, I went to Africa or to Asia or to the American South or to South America to look at race*, as if it now mainly can be found in a sort of wildlife preserve separate from everyday experience. And then there is the enduring American thing of seeing race as a white and black affair, where only the black people are raced and the white people write about them when asked to think about race, rather than writing about themselves. Whites still need the contrast, it seems, to see their own race, and even when seen, so often the vision remains myopic.

So to say, as a white writer, *I have a right to write about whoever I want, including writing from the point of view of characters of color* is to begin the conversation in the wrong place. Our imaginations are creatures as limited as we ourselves are. They are not some special, uninfiltated realm that transcends

the messy realities of our lives and minds. To think of creativity in terms of transcendence is itself specific and partial. And it is not only white writers who make a prize of transcendence. Many writers of all backgrounds see the imagination as ahistorical, as a generative place where race doesn't and shouldn't enter. In this view the imagination is post-racial. To bring up race for these writers is to inch close to the anxious space of affirmative action, the scarring qualifieds.

So everyone is here.

We want to linger over a few dynamics that seem to exert the strongest pressures on these operations of race in creative life. It is striking to see how many white writers conceive of race and the creative imagination as the question of whether they feel they are permitted to write a character, or a voice, or a persona, "of color." That conception itself points to the whiteness of whiteness—that to write race would be to write "color," to write an other, rather than to write whiteness, to consider the privilege and intellectual property value of whiteness. What we're describing here is a dominant racial imagination. What white artists might do is not imaginatively inhabit the other because that is their right as artists, but instead embody and examine the interior landscape that wishes to talk about rights, about access, that wishes to move freely and unbounded across time, space and lines of power, that wishes to inhabit whomever it chooses.

It should also conversely not be assumed that it is "easy" or "natural" to write scenarios or characters whose race matches (whatever that might mean) one's own. This is the trap that writers of color still must negotiate; it's the place where "write what you know" becomes plantational in effect.

Are we saying that no one can write from a different racial other's point of view? We're saying we'd like to change the terms of that conversation. To ask instead why and what for, not just if and how. What is the charisma of what I feel estranged from, and why might I wish to enter and inhabit it? To ask



what we think we know, and how we might undermine our own sense of authority. To not assume that the presence of race deforms the lyric, renders the lyric sadly earthbound. We are ourselves earthbound. And race is one of the things that binds us.

What we want to avoid at all costs is an opposition between writing that accounts for race and writing that is “universal.” If we continue to think of the “universal” as the pinnacle, we will always discount writing that doesn’t look universal because it accounts for race. The universal is a fantasy. But we are captive to a sensibility that defines the universal, still, as white. We are captive, still, to a style of championing literature that says work by writers of color succeeds when a white person can nevertheless relate to it. To say this book by a writer of color is great because it transcends its particularity to say something “human” is to reveal the racist underpinning that people of color are not human, only achieve the human in certain circumstances. We could try to say instead that in the presence of good writing a reader is given something to know. Something is brought into being that might otherwise not be known.

The racial imaginary changes over time, in part because artists get into tension with it, challenge it, alter its availabilities. Sometimes it changes very rapidly, as in our own lifetimes. But it has yet to disappear. Pretending it is not there—not there in imagined time and space, in lived time and space, in legislative time and space—will not hurry it out of existence. Instead our imaginings might test our inheritances, to make way for a time when such inheritances no longer ensnare us. But we are creatures of this moment, not that one.

**|** Claudia Rankine ’86 is the Henry G. Lee Professor of English at Pomona College. Her most recent book, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf Press, 2014), was a finalist for the National Book Award for Poetry in 2014. Beth Loffreda is associate professor of American studies and creative writing at the University of Wyoming. She is the author of *Losing Matt Shepard: Life and Politics in the Aftermath of Anti-Gay Murder* (Columbia University Press, 2000).



PHOTO BY ARTHUR EVANS

Lalla Essaydi (Moroccan, b. 1956), *Converging Territories #10*, 2003, C-print mounted on Plexiglas, overall: 47<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 59 in. (121.8 x 149.9 cm.), Museum Purchase, Kathryn Hurd Fund, M.2004.3.1.

## Converging Territories

Lalla Essaydi’s artistic work is at once imposing and intimate. *Converging Territories #10*, part of the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) collection, is a large-format, nearly life-sized self-portrait. Yet the scene Essaydi depicts—she is seated, with her back to the viewer, amid pools of white fabric that she’s covering with Arabic calligraphy—evokes a domestic space.

The artwork is one of 30 photographs in the series *Converging Territories*, an exploration of gendered space in the traditional culture of Morocco, where Essaydi grew up. *Converging Territories #10* is studied in many courses across the Williams curriculum, including Africana, Arabic and Latina/o studies, art history, comparative literature, studio art and history. This semester, it’s one of the works being explored in the interdisciplinary course *Contemporary Art of the African Diaspora*, taught by Maurita Poole, the museum’s Mellon Curatorial Fellow for Diversity in the Arts.

*Converging Territories #10* has been included in several WCMA exhibitions, including last October’s “Race in the Life of the Mind,” developed by poet Claudia Rankine ’86 in conjunction with a reading from her book *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf Press, 2014). Rankine is compiling written and creative responses to the exhibition for a publication (printed as part of WCMA’s Publication Studio) related to her latest book, *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind* (Fence Books), due out in March.

Essaydi, who now lives in the U.S., has worked in several media, including painting, video, film, installation and analog photography. Her photographs often feature women dressed in fabrics inscribed with henna calligraphy; the women are posed in front of abstract backgrounds that use the same cloth and are covered in the same script.

“In my art,” Essaydi says in her artist’s statement, “I wish to present myself through multiple lenses—as artist, as Moroccan, as traditionalist, as Liberal, as Muslim. In short, I invite viewers to resist stereotypes.”

Essaydi said in a 2012 Q&A with *PBS NewsHour* that she sees her work as “intersecting with the presence and absence of boundaries; of history, gender, architecture and culture; that mark spaces of possibility and limitation. That is my story as well.”



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