

Collegiate Anthropologist

The State University of New York at Potsdam



INSIDE

- The Archaeology of Black Lives in St. Lawrence County
- Immigration and Abjectivity
- Deaf Culture

A faculty profile, advice column, how-to-column and more...



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COVER PHOTO: *SUNY Potsdam students learning to make hard cider in one of Dr. Messner's experimental archaeology classes (Photograph by Jason Hunter).*

Dedication



The *Collegiate Anthropologist* Editorial Team would like to dedicate this issue to the memory of Elizabeth Howell. Beth, from Patterson, New York, was a senior music education student at the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam, studying to become an orchestra director. She was an exceptional cellist, rising through the ranks of the cello studio to serve as principal cellist of the Crane Symphony Orchestra.

Beth was sought-after as a collaborator in chamber music and as a support musician on her colleagues' recitals. She was a dedicated and talented educator, sharing her passion and love of music with young students through the National String Project at Crane. Prior to attending Crane, Beth was very active in her community, particularly at the Danbury Music Center, where she performed with the orchestra and danced in their production of the Nutcracker.

Beth was a much-loved daughter by her parents, Ann and Joe, and also a granddaughter, sister, and niece. She was an unforgettable friend, classmate, student, teacher, and leader at Crane. Her classmates speak passionately of Beth's compassion, wisdom, and strength, and how she would always stick up for those who were being treated unfairly. Beth's former students in the National String Project admired her outstanding musicianship, as well as her kindness and generosity of spirit.

A Note from the Editor



The *Collegiate Anthropologist* is proud to deliver another fresh issue complete with the captivating research and exciting experiences of selected SUNY Potsdam Anthropology Department students. The *Collegiate Anthropologist* offers undergraduate students a unique opportunity to highlight the exemplary skills and knowledge they have developed through their studies by publishing original research in an academic journal. In addition to the excitement that comes with showcasing their work to the campus community, students who share published work stand out when applying to graduate schools and seeking employment.

In this issue, we shine the spotlight on a wide range of topics from the four subfields of anthropology. You will read about archaeology that seeks to include the voices of Black residents who lived in St. Lawrence County during the initial post-emancipation period; the immense challenges that Deaf culture has overcome to legitimize American Sign Language; and the disheartening limitations faced by in-between-status undocumented individuals with no clear pathway to obtain citizenship. You will also learn about Dr. Malit's extremely exciting finds from a site in Ngobit, Kenya, one of which has the potential to dramatically shift the evolutionary history of humanity! This is merely a preview of the trove of incredible work that our editorial team and student authors have included within.

Serving as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Collegiate Anthropologist* has been an exceptionally rewarding, exciting, and novel experience. I would like to thank the student authors for their dedication, curiosity, and motivation to learn; the passion displayed in your work brings our publication to life. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to the entire editorial team for all their hard work, punctuality, and responsiveness during our collaborative project; I was thoroughly impressed with your ability to produce quality work despite the abbreviated timeline caused by the delayed start of the semester. A huge thank you to Dr. Lydia Rodríguez for keeping our team of predominantly first-time editors on track with her gentle patience and tremendous guidance throughout the publication process. Lastly, I am grateful to Dr. Hadley Kruczek-Aaron who recommended that I lead the editorial team. You recognized in me the qualities needed to work as an editor that I may have otherwise overlooked. Through the collaborative work of everyone mentioned, I have the honor of presenting this year's *Collegiate Anthropologist* to you. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Charlie

Charlie Sarkioglu
Editor-in-Chief

Archaeology 2021 Field School at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

CASSANDRA SPILLANE



From left to right is Samuel Rosenberg from SUNY Potsdam and Cory Martinez of Portland State University showing some fire-cracked rock that was found in the riverside units (Photograph by Emma Boutain).

For archaeology majors at SUNY Potsdam, field school is not only a graduation requirement, but also an incredible opportunity to put the skills we spent years learning in the classroom to the test. During a typical year, the SUNY Potsdam Anthropology Department faculty host their own field school, either locally or abroad. Unfortunately, they were unable to do so in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. As a result, students wishing to complete their field school had to seek opportunities outside of SUNY Potsdam. For two of us, this meant working with Portland State University, Washington State University, and the National Park Service at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site in Vancouver, Washington.

The entire field school took place over six weeks, during which time we learned archaeological field, survey, and lab methods from professional

archaeologists associated with the hosting universities, as well as the National Park Service. Over the course of the experience, we alternated between excavation sites, working in the lab, cataloging, learning survey techniques, and helping finish up data collection from a cemetery associated with the fort.

Due to the nature of its continuous occupation, Fort Vancouver is one of the most important historical sites in the Pacific Northwest. Prior to colonization, the site's closeness to the Columbia River made it an important site for trade amongst the various native communities that originally called the region home and an invaluable food source, especially when salmon returned from the ocean to spawn yearly. The Fort itself was established in 1824 as part of the London-based Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) fur-trading operation. As business boomed, a village was established around the fort, which eventually



Potsdam student Samuel Rosenberg cleaning an artifact in the building we used as a lab; cleaning and learning basic lab techniques was an important component of the field school (Photograph by Cory Martinez).

became the largest colonial community in the Pacific West prior to American expansion. The village consisted of a diverse group of people, with members encompassing native Americans of many tribes, native Hawaiians, Europeans, and others. In 1849, the fort became part of a United States army post. It was the first of its kind in the Pacific Northwest. During the Army's stay at the fort, the Pearson Airfield was established after a spruce mill was demolished in the 1920s; it is still in use today. The military held a strong presence at Fort Vancouver until the end of World War II, and in 1949 it became a National Historic Site.

The focus of our excavations was a strip of land on the Columbia River waterfront. The river was the main route to Fort Vancouver. Waterfront development to bolster this included a shipyard, boat shed, a wharf, distillery, salmon salting and pickling



Cassandra Spillane of SUNY Potsdam screening the sod cap from the riverside units, with the railway in the background (Photograph by Cory Martinez).

warehouse, tanning pits, and some dwellings. We were looking for a field hospital that was established during a presumed malaria outbreak that ravaged the region between 1830 and 1833. Excavations conducted in the 1970s revealed the site of the hospital itself and a palisade wall around it used to aid in quarantining patients. Evidence of fire pits was also found, which were believed to purify the 'contaminated' air with their smoke to aid in stopping the spread of malaria, in addition to their likely use in cooking and the disposal of dirty beds and clothing from those inside the hospital. We were specifically looking for the southern part of the hospital, which eluded the original excavations and general evidence of 19th-century occupation and development by the waterfront. While the evidence of the past had been buried over the years, a popular park, roads, and

Fort Vancouver field school

a railway were built on top of what once was the hospital.

Although the summers on the West Coast are already much hotter than those we are used to on the East Coast, we experienced one of the hottest weekends on record within a city in the United States, with the highest temperature clocking in at 116 degrees Fahrenheit. While we got called off on the hottest days, we still adjusted to working in less than favorable conditions. Fortunately, whenever we were actively excavating, we used large canopies over each unit, which kept most of the sun off of us and the rain off of us on wet days. Every day at noon, we would break for lunch, and everyone who was working at the excavation units would gather under a convenient grove of trees to chat and compare finds for the day.

The main units were on either side of the road, one closer to the train tracks and the other right on the waterfront. The units we opened were all standard 1 x 1-meter units. The survey work was done prior to the field school, so there were no shovel test pits (STPs) open. We learned survey techniques like pedestrian surveys, looking for artifacts on the surface, and digging shovel test pits in association with an ongoing project to lay a fiberoptic cable between the visitor center and the Pearson Airfield. On the site itself, we were able to experience all the trimmings of fieldwork. Apart from the actual excavation units, we also learned how to map out and plan units, interpret soil stratigraphy, and use screening techniques. Screening is the physical process of taking the excavated soil and pushing it through two separate screens to ensure that no artifacts are missed.

The waterfront units were sandwiched between two walking paths that experienced heavy traffic day in and day out. As a result, field school students got good at answering numerous questions from various members of the public about exactly why we were digging in the middle of their park. Between children asking if we were looking for dinosaurs and the same five jokes about finding gold, we heard it all. We became particularly good at figuring out how to explain archaeology to the public.

Although we did not find a single T-Rex fossil, we did discover lots of other very cool artifacts on the site. We found some complete points that were made of chert and flint, but the most notable find for us East Coast archaeologists was an obsidian point. From a New Yorker's perspective, finding obsidian during an excavation would be like finding gold. As there are no volcanoes in the region, any obsidian found at a northeast site would have had to have been traded from coast to coast. However, the famous Mt. Helens and Mt. Rainier volcanoes, which were visible from the site of our field school in Vancouver, Washington, on clear days, could have been the original source of the obsidian that we found.

Other notable finds included over 900 pieces of green glass bottle fragments in one 10-centimeter level of a unit. Every single one of these pieces had to be cleaned individually in the lab.

In the end, we did not find the south wall of the pandemic hospital that we were looking for during excavation. However, we did end up with lots of 19th-century and earlier material, which will help later teams preserve and interpret this small area of history for the interested public.

The bonds forged between students at field school cannot be compared to any other experience;



An obsidian point was found in the portion of the site where there was once a pond (Photograph by Pete Benson).

we are required to work in incredibly close quarters, doing physically demanding work for hours out of the day. We quickly learned how to work effectively with personalities that may have clashed with our own, and we made friends that hopefully will last a lifetime. Current Potsdam students who either need a field school to complete their archaeology major or are just interested in gaining this sort of experience can look towards the program being put

together this summer by Dr. Hadley Kruzcek-Aaron in Lake Placid, New York. They will be excavating homesteads associated with a portion of Adirondack and American history that have not been studied previously. Since the focus is on women, African Americans, and the working class, the field school experience hosted by SUNY Potsdam this summer will be an excellent opportunity to participate in groundbreaking work.



All of the participants and teachers for the field school gathered for a group picture on the last day of excavations (Photograph by Doug Wilson).

About the Author

Cassandra Spillane is a senior Archaeological Studies major with minors in Wilderness Education, Anthropology, and Museum Studies. At Potsdam, she is the president of the Anthropology Club and has conducted independent research with a Kilmer grant. After graduating, she is working in CRM before planning on a graduate degree and eventual Ph.D.

The Archaeology of Black Lives in St. Lawrence County: The Johnson Family of Ogdensburg

SAM ROSENBERG

Introduction

The history of the United States that is taught and commonly known is biased. It was written by and for White people and has excluded other perspectives and voices from the narratives it tells. One of the most significant groups that has been systematically ignored and disrespected by history is the Black American population. The history of St. Lawrence County in the North Country of New York State is exemplary of this issue. Most of the prominent and well-known figures in the history of the county were White men, with all other groups getting a footnote at best. Through archaeology, we can begin to uncover some of the untold stories about the Black residents of St. Lawrence County and shift the narrative to be more inclusive of the different people living here.

Historical and Geographic Context

St. Lawrence County is at the northern edge of New York State, with the northern border of the county bordering Canada at the St. Lawrence River, which it is named after. It is also the largest county in the state, at roughly 2880 square miles (History of St. Lawrence Co., 1875). The St. Lawrence is the largest river in the county, with other major rivers including the St. Regis, Raquette, Indian, Grasse, and Oswegatchie Rivers all flowing into it. Other significant bodies of water include Black Lake, Cranberry Lake, and Tupper Lake, which is partially in the county and partially in Franklin County. The southeast portion of the county contains part of the Adirondack Mountain range, and the rest of the county is flatter and lower (History of St. Lawrence Co., 1875).

"Through archaeology, we can begin to uncover some of the untold stories about the Black residents of St. Lawrence County and shift the narrative to be more inclusive of the different people living here."

In the late 19th century, the most populated places in the county were the city of Ogdensburg on the St. Lawrence River, and the towns of Oswegatchie near Ogdensburg, Potsdam on the Raquette River, and Canton on the St. Regis River (History of St. Lawrence Co., 1875). Religious groups in St. Lawrence County in the 19th century included Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Catholics, and Protestants (History of St. Lawrence Co., 1875). A small population of Jews also came to the county beginning in the 1850s, concentrated primarily in Ogdensburg until the 1890s. The largest industry in the region was logging. There were also many farms in the region, and manufacturing became a significant component of the economy by the end of the 19th century (History of St. Lawrence Co., 1875).

The Black Population of St. Lawrence County

Using data from United States Federal Censuses from 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900, statistics about the Black community of St. Lawrence County in the 19th century have been created to learn about historical changes within the population. For the purposes of this paper, the Black community includes people marked as Black and Mulatto in the census. Compared to the larger population, it was relatively small but significant. The population fluctuated from the smallest number of people, at 35 in 1850, to the most people, at 94 in 1880. In 1850, there was a high number of adults over the age of 18 compared to children. This could be because the community was just beginning to form, so fewer people had settled down long enough to have children yet. After this decade, the ratio of children to adults stayed consistent at around

Census Year	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900
Total Population	35	58	47	94	74
Percentage Adults (18 and older)	68.60%	48.30%	53.20%	47.90%	77.00%
Percentage Male	54.30%	48.30%	53.20%	54.30%	52.70%
Literacy Rate	70.80%	46.40%	72.00%	77.10%	66.60%
Percentage of adult property owners	8.30%	17.90%	20%		17.20%
Average property value	\$900	\$389	\$220		

Table 1. Size of Black Population of St. Lawrence County. Source: United States Census, 1850-1900.

one to one. The literacy rate dropped from 70.8% in the 1850 census to 46.4% in the 1860 census, and the average property value dropped between the 1850 census and the 1870 census. Both statistics point to the new Black residents of St. Lawrence County being poorer and less educated than the people already living there. However, the literacy rate rose again in the 1870 census, indicating that learning to read and write was rising at a faster rate than the accumulation of wealth and property.

The 1870 census is also the first one that has members of the Black community of the county who were born in Southern States (Table 3). They were likely all or mostly former enslaved persons who had come North after or during the Civil War. As shown in Table 2, the most common occupations listed on the censuses among the Black residents of the county were farmer, laborer, and servant, which are all unskilled and working-class jobs. There were some people doing other types of work, like barbers, saloon keepers, and bakers, but they were in the minority. Farmer was the most common occupation in 1850, but then it was outpaced by laborer in 1860. There were no servants listed for either of those first two decades, but it became the most common occupation in the 1870 census. In the 1880 and 1900 censuses, laborers became the most common, possibly as a result of the growing industry in the county.

The Johnson Family

The Johnson family of Ogdensburg consisted of James “Jim” Johnson, Margaret Johnson, and their three children, William F, Norris, and Allen. Margaret was born around 1850 in the state of New York to a father from Pennsylvania and a mother from New York. Her maiden name may have been Wilson, based on the Social Security application filed by Norris in 1944. Slavery ended in New York in 1827, 23 years before she was born.

More is known about Jim because of a detailed obituary published in the Ogdensburg Journal at the time of his death. According to the obituary, he was born into slavery on a Virginia plantation around 1849. He was twelve years old at the start of the Civil War, and when the fighting reached Virginia, he escaped to the Northern army. After the war, he was brought to New York by an army surgeon to his hometown of Redwood in Jefferson County and lived with him for several years before moving to Ogdensburg in 1869 (Ogdensburg Journal, 1902). This is slightly contradicted by the 1870 census, which shows he was living in Hammond, a town between Redwood and Ogdensburg. His appearance in the 1870 census was not discovered with the rest of the data because he is listed as person of mixed descent in the actual document, but he was accidentally listed as white in the digital version. He seems to have

Archaeology of Black Lives

moved to Ogdensburg by November 1871 because he is mentioned in an Ogdensburg newspaper article (*Down Salt River*, 1871). Jim was one of 17 Black people who were born in the South and moved to St. Lawrence County between 1860 and 1870, most likely fleeing slavery and oppression. Virginia is especially well-represented in that group, with 9 other people also coming from there. Many of them did not stay in the county for more than 10 years, as the number of people from the South declined by 1880.

Jim and Margaret met at some point, and then, around 1875, they had their first child, William. They had their second child, Norris, around 1877, and their third child, Allen, in 1880. The obituary states that Margaret passed away around 1878 (*Ogdensburg Journal*, 1902), but this would be impossible because she is listed in the 1880 census and her child was born in 1880. Regardless of the exact year, she and Allen passed away, and William moved away to Utica at some point before 1902 (*Ogdensburg Journal*, 1902). According to the obituary and another newspaper article, Jim began to have multiple heart attacks in the first week of February 1902, at one point being discovered by a passing police officer leaning out of his window and calling for help. He was said to be in a serious condition by a doctor, and he passed away due to heart failure three months later, on May 2, 1902 (*Ogdensburg Journal*, 1902). Based on his gravestone in Ogdensburg Cemetery, Norris continued to live in Ogdensburg until his death in 1958. He does not seem to have had any other family.

Based on the 1880 census, the Johnsons lived on Caroline Street near the intersection with Canton Street. It is unclear if they owned or rented the property and what type of dwelling it was. The 1900 census reports Jim living at 61 Ford Street, which is in the commercial downtown area. This is corroborated by his obituary, which states that he lived above the Ogdensburg Bank on Ford Street for many years. The 1898 Ogdensburg-Sanborn map shows that the third and fourth floors of the buildings on this block had apartments (*Insurance Map of Ogdensburg*, 1898). His apartment was above the fourth or fifth door, and it is known that he lived on the fourth floor, because the "Jim Johnson Sick" (*Ogdensburg Journal*, 1902) article specifies that his apartment was on the top floor. This block contained many shops and businesses, including jewelry stores, drug stores, hotels, a cigar store, and a barber shop. It is only a block away from the Oswegatchie Town Hall and the Ogdensburg Opera House, and two blocks away from the First Presbyterian Church. It is also on the same street as the location of the Anshe Zophen Synagogue. Perhaps the fact that he lived in such a central location contributed to his notoriety. His obituary explains that he was well known by the people of Ogdensburg (*Ogdensburg Journal*, 1902), and the fact that he was likely the only Black person living in this area that was highly visible may have made him more recognizable by the White residents. It is unknown if this made him feel more welcome or more isolated. His position as a resident of rented

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900
Farmer	5	1	4	5	3
Laborer	2	7	4	12	15
Servant	0	0	5	6	11
Other	3	7	5	10	5

Table 2. Occupation of the Black Population of St. Lawrence County. Source: United States Census, 1850-1900.

property instead of owning his own property was shared by most of the Black population of the county in the 19th century, with the highest number of Black property owners at one time being 20% of the adults in the population, according to the 1870 census.

In the 1870 census, Jim's occupation is listed as "servant boy," working for and living with the Catlin family. He was 21 at the time, so the use of the word "boy" is demeaning and likely racially motivated, especially considering the White 17-year-old also working for the Catlins was listed as a "working man." Jim's occupation is listed in the 1880 census as a laborer and in the 1900 census as a day laborer. His obituary clarifies his job slightly by describing him as a "handy man" employed by various people. He is also described as "sober, industrious, and honest" and that his employers trusted him. Laborer was the most common listed occupation among Black adults

in St. Lawrence County in both the 1880 and 1900 censuses, as shown in Table 2.

Potential for Excavation

If an archaeologist were to attempt to excavate the Johnson residence, they would encounter some problems. The first problem is the fact that they lived in multiple locations over their lives in Ogdensburg. It is also unclear how long they stayed at each place. Their residence on Caroline Street could have potential because they had their own dwelling number on the 1880 census, indicating they did not share the house with any other families. However, they may have only stayed there a few years, which would not be long enough to leave a distinct archaeological mark on the site. The apartment that Jim Johnson lived in later in his life might potentially not have the longevity problem because his obituary

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900
New York	27	40	19	59	40
Massachusetts	1	0	0	0	0
Connecticut	1	0	0	0	0
Pennsylvania	0	1	1	1	2
Maine	0	0	0	3	0
Vermont	0	0	0	0	1
Virginia	0	0	9	7	7
Tennessee	0	0	1	0	1
North Carolina	0	0	4	1	2
Georgia	0	0	2	1	2
Other Country	5	14	7	18	18
Unknown	0	1	0	0	1
Total Northern States	29	41	20	63	43
Total Southern States	0	0	17	9	13

Table 3. Birth State of the Black Population of St. Lawrence County.
Source: 1850-1900 census.

as Laurie Wilkie wrote about, patent medicines were sometimes substituted for traditional medicines (Wilkie 1996). However, if the ratio is significantly different from other samples, influence from the traditions of the enslaved may be ascertained.

The Black communities of St. Lawrence County in the 19th century are an important component of the history of the region but have been overlooked by historians because they are not the "Great White Men" who are often focused on. People like Jim Johnson were well-known and well-respected figures within their communities and made them better places. Jim's life was at times dramatic and mundane, and it gives us a better understanding of the time in which he lived. His story and the stories of others like Margaret, which may not be as well-preserved in public sources, are important to try to understand and put back into the narrative.

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About the Author

Sam Rosenberg is an Archaeological Studies major with minors in Museum Studies and Anthropology. He attended field school in 2021 at Fort Vancouver in Washington State and was a recipient of a grant from the Kilmer Fund to conduct archaeological research on the Jewish communities of St. Lawrence County.

Abjectivity Plaguing Undocumented Immigrants in the United States

CHASE CAMERON

Introduction

In "Awakening to a Nightmare: Abjectivity and Illegality in the Lives of Undocumented 1.5-Generation Latino Immigrants in the United States," Gonzales and Chavez reflect on the 1.5 Generation Latino Immigrants; this group refers to children who immigrated to the United States who live in an in-between status where they are not 1st generation or 2nd generation immigrants, but are somewhere in the middle. This also means that they lack a concrete path to citizenship in the United States, which leads to these young people not having

a clear direction when it comes to growing out of their childhood lives and moving into adulthood. Their so-called "illegal" status makes certain events, like run-ins with the cops and economic struggles, more traumatic and makes this group feel "unwanted" by the larger society of the United States (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). This leads to the general research question that the authors used to guide their study, "Does the undocumented status of young Latino men and women who came to the United States at a young age affect their political, civic, and public selves?"

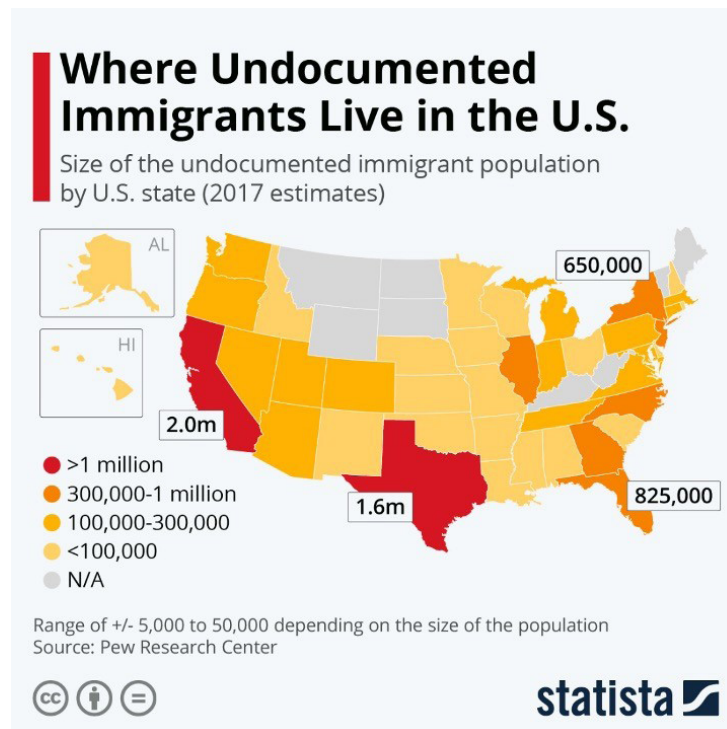


Figure 1. Where Undocumented Immigrants Live in the U.S. Authors: Buchholz, Katharina, and Felix Richter. Courtesy of the Pew Research Center. Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/18392/undocumented-us-population-by-state/>

(Gonzales and Chavez 2012, 259).

To explore this question, the authors conducted surveys and in-depth ethnographic interviews that came from extensive participant observation, which resulted in the collection of survey data from 805 Latinos and 396 non-Latino whites, as well as 80 in-depth interviews mainly with individuals of Mexican origin (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). The results of the study indicate that undocumented individuals from this 1.5 Generation felt like outcasts in the only place they knew as home, causing them to become less outgoing and crushing their dreams of higher education. The lives of these undocumented people have been put on hold, causing them to take lower-paying temporary jobs that keep them in abject poverty until they can gain citizenship. Some were emboldened by this illegality, using it as motivation to become stronger advocates for their own rights, supporting bills such as the DREAM Act.

Exploring Abjectivity

This article draws upon a few different theoretical ideas to further their research. The first idea is a term introduced by Sarah S. Willen called "abjectivity," which combines that of the abject and subjectivity (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). The abject in this context refers to those being "cast away" or "thrown away," being used to describe those in the lowest and most demeaning social statuses (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). The authors also look to Julia Kristeva who first pointed out the implications of the abject being an exclusionary practice that produced discrete subjects (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). Additionally, Judith Butler added to this definition of the abject, describing it as that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, and literally rendered as other (Gonzales and Chavez 2012).

"The 1.5 Generation Latino Immigrants refers to children who immigrated to the United States who live in an in-between status, where they are not first-generation or second-generation immigrants, but they are somewhat in the middle."

Various intersections of gender, race, sexuality, nationality, and other factors can demarcate the abject in society. An example of this comes from Nicholas DeGenova who coined "American Abjectivity", a form of racialized identity that Mexican migrants projected onto U.S.-born people of color (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). For the purposes of the article, they define the abject as the undocumented children of immigrants who have been expelled from society in the United States and go on to become teenagers and, later, adults, who are disconnected from the dreams and lives that they imagined for themselves, as James Ferguson notes (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). As one of the authors, Leo R. Chavez puts forward, these abject subjects inhabit a liminal space where there is a boundary maintained between their lives in the nation and their lives as part of the nation to maintain social control and regulation over them (Gonzales and Chavez 2012).

The other aspect of their theoretical framework comes from the use of subjectivity to understand living an abject life. They use Sarah Willen's research among undocumented migrants in Israel to emphasize the importance of lived experiences, or using subjectivity in abject spaces, as they put it (Gonzales and Chavez 2012).

An important theorist they draw upon is Michel Foucault whose work is focused on how the practices targeting undocumented migrants shape the lived experiences of these 1.5 Generation Latinos and how they act in response to this. Willen says that, as a condition, being "illegal" contributes to subjective understandings of the world and to our identities themselves (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). Willen also states that "migrant 'illegality' is a catalyst for particular forms of 'abjectivity.'" The 1.5 Generation who is subjected to this position of "illegality" exist in a space entirely different from U.S.

Abjectivity and Immigration

Figure 2. Protestors display a sign that reads "Nobody is Illegal." Author: Alisdare Hickson. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nobody_is_Illegal!_\(43445771951\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nobody_is_Illegal!_(43445771951).jpg)

citizens, inhabiting a non-existence that separates them from their legal lives (Gonzales and Chavez 2012).

Personal Stories

Gonzales and Chavez illustrate the 1.5 Generation Latinos' struggles and their experiences of abjectivity with several revealing examples. The first example follows a 16-year-old named Sergio, who only discovered his "illegal" status when he tried to buy his first car. Having worked two different jobs to save up enough money, Sergio bragged to his friends that he would be the first one to drive (Gonzales and Chavez 2021). When Sergio had to produce a social security number at the DMV, he had to ask his mother for it, which she obviously responded to by saying he didn't have one, forcing him to come to terms with his illegality at an older age (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). This example connects to a couple of the theoretical ideas from the paper.

One example comes from the author, Chavez, who examined the difference between their lives in the nation and their lives as part of the nation. The authors use this idea to show how this young 1.5 generation of Latinos experience their status in society as they grow up. First, when they are kids, there are no systems that show them as illegal. When they

get to the age when they start making decisions for themselves at 16 and older, these systems appear and show them how they are not truly a member of the society they live in as defined by current citizenship statuses (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). This also connects to Willen's theory that migrant "illegality" is a catalyst for different forms of abjectivity, as shown in this example where Sergio is relegated to public transportation or paying per ride due to his lack of a social security card.

Gonzales and Chavez also narrate the story of a migrant woman named Esperanza. At the time they were interviewing her, Esperanza was moving from low-paying job to low-paying job trying to make ends meet while her friends were off doing what they dreamed to do in life (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). Being undocumented means that she cannot apply for her dream job like her friends have, and also, she cannot travel with her friends to events meant for people 18 and older because she doesn't have a U.S. identification card (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). Given all of this, Esperanza still has hope that one day legislation like the DREAM act will give her and others the opportunity to become U.S. citizens, showing that in her case, the abjectivity she faces motivates her to keep going. This reflects some of the theoretical ideas brought up in the theoretical framework, one

of those ideas being the term abject, which refers to those who have been "cast away" or "thrown away" from society. The authors recognize that existing as undocumented in U.S. society prevents you from occupying the same niche as others, causing those like Esperanza to feel like they have been relegated to a demeaning position in life, even forcing them to reevaluate what they see as degrading work like cleaning toilets and homes (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). This is also a good example where the theory of subjectivity comes into play, especially using this perspective to understand the feelings and emotions that drive certain responses from those being studied (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). Taking this postmodernist approach into account gives this paper a more holistic perspective, understanding that the feelings of respondents can affect their experiences in this outsider view of American society.

Gonzales and Chavez also reflect on how the status of "illegality" can put a halt to immigrants' plans for a bright future (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). Dora, a 26-year-old from Santa Ana, was not working at the time she was interviewed in fear that she would be caught and possibly deported from the country. Her situation was different because, while living at home with her family, she was not expected to contribute as much to support the household, even though she wanted to. This allowed her to avoid situations that could put her face-to-face with the law, but at the same time, it ruined her chances of moving on with her life and stunted her growth as an individual. I think this act of expelling her hopes and dreams from herself reflects Judith Butler's idea of removing part of yourself due to your undocumented status (Gonzales and Chavez 2012). It also resonates with James Ferguson's idea that those suffering from abjectivity, especially when they learn about their status, lose out on aspects of their lives such as dreams of a future job or education that they cannot achieve anymore, losing the drive to accomplish these tasks (Gonzales and Chavez 2012).

Concluding Remarks

Gonzales and Chavez (2012) used the notion of 'subjectivity' to explore personal stories from 1.5 Generation Latinos regarding their experiences as undocumented individuals living in the United

States. This is a relatively new idea that explores the impact of personal feelings and emotions on those being studied. I think that this theoretical perspective is relevant because the topic of being undocumented affects each person differently and their experiences with systems of control such as law enforcement, applying for jobs, and access to education. These experiences are felt differently by each individual, which broadens the information you can get from each respondent.

Alternatively, the authors could have used symbolic and interpretive anthropology in this article, mainly the idea of rites of passage (Van Gennep 1960). This theory would yield different results from those of the postmodernist theories that were used in the paper. Rites of passage are broken down into three stages, the first being separation, which is definitely experienced by these 1.5 generation Latinos who are becoming adults. The second stage is called liminality, which involves leaving your old stage but not entering a new one either, a state of mind shared by a good majority of the respondents in Gonzales and Chavez's study (2012). I think that one could focus on this stage of liminality throughout the whole paper, specifically on the period of outsiderhood that these migrants feel when they first learn that they are different from those who have U.S. citizenship, separating them into a different group from others. Additionally, the third stage of reintegration is important because, among a large majority of the respondents, reintegration has not been achieved, forcing them to exist in liminality for the rest of their existence. This lack of reintegration can act as both an isolating and rallying factor, causing the individual to shut down or rise above the disadvantaged position that they hold.

There is room for future research in this field, especially when it comes to changes in the liminal phase. As more people immigrate to the United States, and if they remain undocumented, we will see a continued rise in the number of people living in the liminal phase. Research conducted on the lifespan of this liminal phase due to changing political and social factors could bear fruit. Additionally, further research on how this middle phase changes the individual, especially as a result of U.S. customs, would be an interesting path to explore.

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Deaf Culture and the Perception of ASL as a Legitimate Language

DANI SHEMBESH



Young, Deaf man confidently uses ASL at a conference. Photograph by Thiago Barletta on Unsplash

Introduction

The only liberal arts university in the world dedicated to the teaching of deaf students stands in modern-day America. Gallaudet University has stood on American soil since 1864, when it was founded by Thomas Gallaudet (Harvard University 2022). The university created a massive boon to the legitimization of ASL and the many variants of sign language used in the United States, which had not always been so. The public perception of ASL as a legitimate language is a complicated matter that has many layers; it is most directly affected by the way speakers of America's dominant language, its

lingua franca, Standard American (Spoken) English (SAE), have perceived it in the past. Despite many setbacks, ASL has asserted itself multiple times as a legitimate, functional, and sophisticated language system through the perseverance of Deaf culture and its inhabitants.

This article seeks to investigate how Deaf culture has shaped ASL into a language that is valuable in the eyes of the community, despite the fact that it has often faced adversity and the constant implication that ASL is not a legitimate language and it is even illegal in certain official spaces.

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A Look Into Deaf Culture

To begin, we look at what Deaf culture surmounts to and how it asserts itself as a culture of its own, one that has stood the test of time. In a paper published by Gallaudet University, Stephanie Hall explores Deaf culture through the lens of Deaf social clubs. The paper, published in 1991, while dated, remains enlightening by narrating the ways in which Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) people share information, relay customs, and engage in typical cultural behaviors and norms. Likewise, in "A Sociocultural Understanding of Deafness: American Sign Language and the Culture of Deaf People," Timothy Reagan defines Deaf culture through the lens of meeting certain critical criteria including "a common shared language", "a shared awareness of Deaf cultural identity", "a shared historical knowledge and awareness", "a network of voluntary, in-group social organizations", and "distinctive behavioral norms and patterns", among others (Reagan 1995, 243). The ones that will be touched upon here are the shared awareness of Deaf identity, the shared historical context, the distinctive behaviors and conventions, and the voluntary social organizations that arose to supplement Deaf and HOH needs.

However, before we can look at how the Deaf community thrived in the 1990s, we must examine the past. Deaf history, after all, according to Reagan, is an essential part of its culture. So, we look again at Gallaudet and even earlier to the key year of 1714, in which Martha's Vineyard was the perfect oasis of Hearing and deaf/HOH people who "spoke" one another's language. This was a time during which deaf culture and morale thrived. According to Glenna Cooper, during a TED talk in Tulsa, the choice of sign language (MVSL: Martha's Vineyard Sign Language) was never questioned. However, it did not last incredibly long. Sixteen years after Gallaudet was founded, at the Second

International Congress on Education of the Deaf in Milan, the congress decided to endorse oralism at the cost of signed languages, and passed a ban that would effectively make the use of signing in schools illegal (Harvard 2022). The ban would wound the Deaf community dearly, leading to low morale and the loss of many HOH/Deaf people's jobs within the education system (Cooper 2017). The ban would also have a ripple effect in confirming to the general public that Deaf and HOH children had to be taught how to read and speak from a young age, something that would become a recurrent theme in many young Deaf/HOH people's lives up until the late 90s and early 2000s. Having briefly dissected and contextualized the history of deafness and signed languages in America, we move on to how identity shapes culture, and vice versa.

"In contrast to the pathological view of Deafness, the sociocultural perspective asserts that Deafness is not a condition to be fixed, but something to be celebrated and fought for."

What forms Deaf Identity?

As in many cultures, identity is something that is built upon, something that cannot be defined for every individual universally. However, for Deaf/HOH people, their identity begins and ends with the assertion that they are complete the way they are. Later on, I will touch upon the ways in which Deaf/HOH people redefine themselves outside of being "disabled" and how the stigma of disability as something that needs correcting is something they actively fight against. For now, Brueggemann puts it best, "Deaf people—usually seen as "disabled" in terms of what they lack— have been defined and educated by the more dominant Hearing culture in various ways throughout US history" (Brueggemann 1995, 411) . Deaf identity is a direct retaliation towards that enforced definition.

To best describe deaf identity would require a dissertation solely dedicated to the subject, but I will attempt to do it justice. Much like any other cultural identity, the Deaf community has its own

idiosyncrasies that define it and reveal more about the culture than you might expect. For one, there is the "five-step goodbye" that Cooper cites in her talk, *Protecting and Interpreting Deaf Culture* (Cooper 2017), explaining that it is a process during which, unlike with her Hearing friends, a night out with her Deaf friends consists of a goodbye that is stretched out. They never stop communicating with one another, and will spend more than thirty minutes after their intended goodbye continuing to talk and relay information. In her paper, "Door into Deaf Culture: Folklore in an American Deaf Social Club," Hall states that this very habitual behavior is symptomatic of being Deaf in a world where speaking is the primary language: "Because communication may be severely limited at work and at home, the Deaf enthusiastically take advantage of opportunities to converse in their preferred language" (Hall 1991, 424). She recalls that

many people would arrive early and stay late just to talk to one another and catch up in these social clubs. A sort of comfort among those who speak a language uncommon in the workplace is characteristic of many speakers of minority languages and is a common phenomenon, especially when considering the lingering stigma of that particular legislature and its past banning of signed languages.

In her paper, Hall remarks on numerous other ways in which Deaf identity is revealed to be rich in culture. Celebrations were reportedly a huge part of deaf culture. Halloween was a time during which individuals could dress up and become people other than themselves. As Hall states, "Deaf members who wish to conceal their identities from their friends must put on gloves in addition to masks, and even change their walk so they won't be recognized by the way they move" (Hall 1991, 424). From this, we glean



Deaf friends chatting on street. Photograph courtesy of SHVETS production: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/crop-deaf-friends-chatting-on-street-in-winter-7516571/>



Deaf mute friends in university library. Photograph courtesy of SHVETS production: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/deaf-mute-friends-in-university-library-7516574/>

the importance of body language and physicality, as well as the level of attention often prescribed to the hands. Seeing as these are key tenets of ASL, it would make complete sense for the individuals to have to alter their body language and put on gloves so that their close friends, who are so accustomed to paying close attention to both their physicality and the fine details of their hands, would not recognize them. This is something that may very well be unique, for those reasons at least, to the Deaf community and to Deaf culture.

We've established how, at its very core, Deaf culture is boiled down to its historical context and the communal identities of the individuals who take part in it. Now we can begin dissecting how the culture of deafness impacted, and continues to impact, ASL as a flourishing language. However, we must first turn our attention towards the many ways in which

stigma, ableism, and ignorance have affected the Deaf community and, as a direct consequence, their pride, identity, and language.

Ableism in America: The Stigma of Deafness

The most poignant example of a flawed system working against deaf and HOH persons was exemplified at Gallaudet itself, only three years before the Americans with Disabilities Act (Harvard University 2022), which worked to prevent discrimination based on disability, was passed. In the year 1988, some two thousand students at Gallaudet formed an uprising that would have a communal ripple effect across the entire country. For one hundred and twenty-four years, Gallaudet, a university for the Deaf and HOH, had been represented by a Hearing president, "elected by a principally hearing board of directors" (Brueggemann 1995, 409). For many years,

Deaf people did not have a representative for their voice where they should have had it most. This is as ridiculous as a historically Black school being run by primarily White directors. How was it ever possible for the Hearing presidents of the past to really understand their students' needs? It is clear from the uprising that the students were not being heard. So, they chose to sit down and make sure that they were. In a little over a week, their presence had been felt, their voice had been heard, and their Hearing president had resigned, making way for a long-time deaf professor at the university to step up and represent them as president (Brueggemann 1995). However, while this was a spectacular change in and of itself, it shed light on the same system mentioned earlier. A system that at its best was flawed, and at its most malicious, was intent on breaking down the Deaf community and stigmatizing ASL as an inferior language, one that is perceived as "limited... merely gestures or mimicry" (Brueggemann 1995, 412), and in some cases, as hardly even a language.

The best way in which the system fails Deaf/HOH individuals starts at home and when they are young. It has been confirmed by multiple accounts, both secondary and primary, that many Hearing doctors and parents will insist on specifically Deaf children learning SAE as their primary language. This includes teaching them to vocalize and read lips, as well as reading and writing in SAE (Brueggemann 1995). Glenna Cooper confirms this experience in retelling the tale of her childhood when her parents were told by an ear, nose, and throat specialist that she should not learn ASL "because it would make [her] isolated from the Hearing community" (Cooper 2017, 0:35-0:45). Cooper's experience is but a drop in the bucket.

In Nyle DiMarco's TED talk at Klagenfurt, the Deaf advocate and philanthropist states that he had learned that over seventy-five percent of Hearing parents would not sign to communicate with their children (DiMarco 2018), presumably, so

their children would not have to rely on using ASL as their primary language in a world that primarily uses SAE. Though his data is unconfirmed and uncited, the figures are not shocking and are in line with what most specialists argue is common for Deaf children, at least in America. This age-old argument relies on the assumption that disability is something to be fixed. Deaf children are identified by their disability, with doctors, specialists, and parents focusing on what they lack, what they cannot do, as opposed to what they can. This negative perspective will only lead to negative results.

Timothy Reagan analyzes two competing ways to view deafness. The first is a "pathological" view of deafness—strictly viewing Deaf people as people who cannot hear. As Reagan remarks, "the pathologic view is premised on the idea that deaf people are not only different from Hearing people, but that they are, at least in a physiological sense, inferior to Hearing people, in that Hearing people can hear while deaf people cannot" (Reagan 1995, 242). So, by that logic, he ascertains that if this view is indeed correct, it will automatically lead to trying to help the disabled and Deaf person to become as close to Hearing as possible. This is incredibly damaging to the Deaf community.

The contrasting argument to the pathological view is the sociocultural perspective on Deafness. In short, sociocultural perspective asserts that Deafness is not a condition to be fixed, but something to be celebrated and fought for (Reagan 1995). Often, Deaf/HOH individuals or Hearing parents that prescribe to the sociocultural perspective have healthier outlooks on life and lead more comfortable, happier lives. They can accept ASL as their primary language, and instead of focusing on what they lack or cannot do, focus on what they can do that no one else can—what they have to offer the world.

On the other hand, even when Deaf individuals do their best with confidence and command of both written SAE and ASL, the world

"Social clubs are an invaluable part of the culture and are huge reason why ASL developed into the sophisticated system that it is today."

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often still does not accept them. As mentioned previously, the outlawing of signed languages in 1880 dealt a hard blow to the progression of signed languages. The outlawing can be boiled down to a lack of understanding as to just how sophisticated signed languages can be, and to the previously described "pathological" view of Deafness as a thing to be cured. Multiple studies confirm the former. Like many complex, sophisticated languages, ASL has its own conventions and rules—Brueggemann, in her paper, even asserts that ASL is inherently "diglossic" in nature. This diglossia illustrates that, like many other languages that are characterized by diglossia, ASL is very much community- and culture-oriented (Brueggemann 1995) and relies on these two factors enormously to flourish and continue to evolve. Furthermore, in some ways, ASL is even more complicated and complex than SAE—its rules differ entirely, and it would be hard for even the most proud English-speakers to pick it up quickly.

The Fight for ASL

Hall's paper on Deaf Social Clubs retells a story of one of its members and how, in a mathematics class, the students had a Deaf teacher who was not allowed to sign to them. Without sign, he repeatedly explained a concept that the students were struggling with, but again and again they failed to comprehend what was being taught. After a few moments of making sure that no one was around to see, he signed the concept to them very quickly, and the class understood immediately (Hall 1991). That is to say, depriving these speakers of the language they best understand and what is best suited to them is an act of violence against their education. This small first-hand experience illustrates the struggle between spoken concepts and signed concepts and how easy it would be for individuals to prosper if they were only taught in the language they understood best.

Even to this day, the stigma against ASL continues. Harvard University, which stopped



Young woman learning sign language during online lesson with tutor. Photograph courtesy of SHVETS production: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/young-lady-learning-sign-language-during-online-lesson-with-female-tutor-7516363/>

teaching ASL in 1994, began teaching it again recently, in 2016 (Harvard University 2022). For such a timeless institution to delegitimize ASL in the 90s and only recently work towards mending is staggering, and a huge reason why many native speakers of the language remain primarily in Deaf/HOH spaces. On the contrary, it is this continued rejection by the more prevalent speakers of America's lingua franca that has taught the Deaf community to rebel against the stigma and to show the world how much they have to offer.

Artist Christine Sun Kim remarks in her TED Talk, "I was born deaf, and I was taught to believe that sound wasn't a part of my life, and I believed it to be true." (Kim 2015, 1:24-1:34) The introduction to her speech on the music of sign language reinforces much of what we have already covered. Perhaps her most poignant remark on how Deaf people differ from Hearing people and how they assert themselves in a world that aims to silence them further, is when she states that unlike Hearing people, she cannot use her physical voice to be heard -- she has to become her voice. Though she means this in the literal sense of physically embodying her words in body language, facial expressions, and mouth movements, it also stands as a metaphor for her becoming part of the "voice" that stands for Deaf rights and empowerment, for the protection of ASL as a legitimate language.

A crucial part includes asserting that ASL has an important place in the world and much to offer, despite its perceived "shortcomings." She mentions that the world we live in is one that values sound like a "social currency" and, one could argue, even monetary value. Music is a part of most everyone's daily lives, something which many people pay and invest multiples of millions of dollars into -- podcasts, albums, films, museum tours, and much more rely on sound, and so much of it remains inaccessible. Sound, to paraphrase, has always been something she felt gate kept away from, something that was not intended for her (Kim 2015).

However, with an ingenuity that is characteristic of the Deaf community, she found ways to vocalize ASL as a language with its own music, using multiple musical metaphors to convey the range of meaning that ASL as a language has.

These romantic notions, and her imagery of ASL as a language that is more like a chord, where the ten fingers of the hands that are playing the notes need to work in harmony to convey ideas and concepts in ASL, provide new perspectives on the language. She does not attempt to compare ASL to English in terms for her audience to understand. Instead, Kim sets the language apart and distinguishes it with its own imagery and definitions. All this to say that part of what the Deaf community does so well, is to make sure that the same sociocultural perspective that they have towards their disability is also present towards ASL. This positive outlook helps build morale amongst ASL users and differentiates it from any other oral language.

Aside from the revolt at Gallaudet University in 1988, perhaps the largest boon to Deaf empowerment, and the most understated one, are the communal efforts of Deaf people across the country -- and how appropriate is that? The social clubs Hall has immersed herself in firsthand are the same ones that Reagan distinguishes as being part of what makes Deaf culture so legitimate. These social clubs are an invaluable part of the culture and are a huge reason why ASL developed into the sophisticated system that it is today. Hall mentions that "local communities stay in touch with one another through national organizations such as the National Association of the Deaf and the American Athletic Association of the Deaf" (Hall 1991, 422). Without these key facets, speakers of the language would not be able to develop it into a language that reflects the needs of its community. This camaraderie and perseverance are intimately reflective of Deaf culture at its best and strongest, and as an extension, ASL itself.

Of course, the fight to assert ASL as a worthwhile language is far from over. Many universities still do not teach it as a language of note, and many people do not consider it a necessary language to learn unless you are impacted by Deafness in some way, whether personally or through friends and family. Even then, not everyone would make the effort to learn an entire language for someone else, even if it meant being able to communicate properly with them. Still, even in the TED Talks I previously

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mentioned, many people who commented below the videos have noted how terrible the editing is for following the signing –ironic, considering the talks are being delivered by Deaf people, and yet the videos themselves are inaccessible, save for the closed captioning.

The conclusion we can reach after exploring Deaf culture, the negative stereotypes that surround disability and ASL, and the ways in which its speakers combat said stereotypes, is that there is a solid link between culture, community, and language. For ASL to prosper, and it surely has, it relies on its speakers, on its advocates, and on the people who see it for the complex and beautiful language that it is. As we move forward, we can thus go on just a little more enlightened about the fact that, just because someone cannot speak, does not mean that they are ever silent.

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About the Author

Danya 'Dani' Shembesh is a graduating student (Class of '22) majoring in Creative Writing. While at SUNY Potsdam, Dani developed an interest in the intersections between linguistics and culture, and she has performed Spoken Word. This is her first published work.

HEARTH is Heart

SIMISOLA MACAULAY

You've probably heard around the Anthropology Department about a new building that will change and expand the work done at the Department. So what is this new building and what is its purpose? Well... It's called "The H.E.A.R.T.H." or the Handcrafted Experiential Archaeological Research and Teaching Hub. It's a blast from the past, a place to learn artisan crafts not commonly taught nowadays. From blacksmithing to hide tanning to hard cider making, a lot will happen in the future with H.E.A.R.T.H. It will give the Department more space and also give students a rare chance to learn skills straight from craftsmen still practicing a variety of historical trades in our contemporary world. So, don't miss the chance to take a class at the HEARTH, the new heart of applied anthropology and archaeology here at SUNY Potsdam.



ABOVE RIGHT:
Guests arriving to the inauguration and dedication of HEARTH, during the 2022 LoKo Arts Festival.

RIGHT:
Dr. Nasser Malit and anthropology students Cipher Gallagher and Seren de Leon throwing atlatl, bringing back to life this ancient spear throwing technique that has been used since the Upper Paleolithic.

BELOW RIGHT:
Anthropology students working on atlatl-throwing technique. Students will now have a permanent space for atlatl practice in one of the outdoor patios by HEARTH. All photographs are by Dr. Lydia Rodríguez.



LEFT: Speaking at the Dedication of HEARTH, Dr. Messner comments on the importance of learning from the past in order to create a better future. The image also shows the 19th century-style brick oven that is the “hearth of HEARTH”. HEARTH will be available for experimental archaeology classes, workshops, and demonstrations for SUNY Potsdam students and the North Country community starting in Fall 2022.

RIGHT: Dean Galbraith welcomes guests and thanks the numerous donors, faculty and staff who have supported HEARTH. Behind her it can be appreciated the beautiful timber frame made of local pinewood by master carpenter Tim Lapka.



ABOVE LEFT: Anthropology student Simisola Macaulay explains to Dr. Malit the process of crafting maple syrup. HEARTH is a living classroom and a learning space for students, faculty, and community members.

ABOVE RIGHT: Maple syrup made by anthropology students in Dr. Messner's ANTH 395 Making Maple Syrup class. This is one of the many applied learning activities that will be carried at HEARTH.



LEFT: Dean Emeritus Dr. Steve Marqusee, surrounded by his family and members of SUNY Potsdam administration and staff, cuts the ribbon and officially inaugurates HEARTH.

Advice Column

How to Present Yourself to Graduate School

SIMISOLA MACAULAY



Applying for graduate school can be both a rewarding and very daunting process. The application process can get confusing and overwhelming very quickly. So here's some advice on applying to grad schools as an Anthropology and Archaeology undergraduate student.

1. Get Involved. Get more involved in the department, whether it's going to the Anthropology Club meetings or working with professors. Being an active member of your department or the school, in general, looks good on your resumes and applications. It shows you have a real interest in anthropology and are willing to dive right into graduate studies.

2. Plan Ahead. Start looking at potential schools and programs at the very least in the fall before you decide to apply. On top of that, try to make a list of your schools and the programs of interest they offer.

3. Reach Out. Once you have your list, try to see if there are any faculty who work in a similar field of research as you (i.e., if you are planning on researching birthing rituals in Indigenous communities, see if a faculty member is researching that). This way, you can reach out to them, learn more about the program, and possibly have a faculty sponsor.

4. Visit. If possible, try your best to visit your top three or four schools. Especially if they are out of state or county. Why? So you can see the campus and area you will be living, working, and going to school in for the next two to five years, depending on if you're going for your master's or up to your Ph.D.

5. Bonus: Internships and Field Schools. Whether you got into anthropology during childhood or later in your academic career, an internship or experiencing field school is a great way to get your feet wet and learn in a more hands-on approach (a.k.a applied learning). Having this experience can solidify your path in the field. Some of these interactions can lead to jobs that can help you while you're doing your postgraduate degrees. Especially if you go to a field school or internship run by one of your top picks, you can work with people that will be your teachers and hopefully future colleagues.

So there you have it, five tips for applying to grad school. If you need help with the process or want to talk about graduate school, ask your advisor or any professor, as they've already crossed that bridge. Happy applying!

The Collegiate Profile: Dr. Nasser Malit, Biological Anthropologist

TYLER KOCIK

It is the late 1980's, and a young Kenyan student by the name of Nasser Malit is soon to take his national exam for the last stage of his 8-4-4 program. This is a system that mirrors the American system of education within Kenya containing three levels of primary education, then secondary, and lastly university. Children from Malit's rural home village amidst the countryside would be some of the first members of this program aimed to tackle education rates within the nation and test the concept's validity. While most children would go on to finish secondary school, very few would qualify for higher education, as positions at universities were strikingly limited within Kenya. Although he possessed limited hours in a rural school, offering a low likelihood of passing the qualifying examination, Malit and one other student passed. The two students would become the first successful members of the program and would prepare themselves for the final step of 8-4-4.

Prior to taking the national exam, Malit filled in a survey asking about his interests in a major in which he selected three possible options in order of preference. His first choice was business, his primary interest at the time. Malit selected business due to his proficiency in accounting, which earned him the nickname "The CEO" while in school. The second option he chose was the education program, because it was easy to qualify with any combination of courses. Malit thought that if he passed the exam, he was likely to attain either business or education. Out of necessity, he checked a third option that he didn't even recognize called "anthropology." He chose anthropology from its limited description, which stated it required

knowledge of biology, humanities, and English. Due to his close relationship with a teacher by the name of Mr. Abuto, who guided him in the subject matter, Malit held a firm grasp on biology.

Finally, a letter arrived that stated Malit's upcoming assignment to a university and major. When he opened the letter, he excitedly checked first where he would be attending. Malit had earned

entry into the University of Nairobi, a beautiful school in the nation's capital. After he peered further down the letter, he was taken aback to find out that they had slotted him for his third choice, anthropology. A major that Malit could not even define at the time was now his future collegiate pathway. Although many locals of Malit's village congratulated him on his accomplishment and he was the subject of much praise by his community, when asked about what he was studying, Malit could only muster, "not a clue!"

Upon Malit's entrance into the University of Nairobi, classes began almost immediately. Every class took place in one singular room that contained all the department's anthropology students. Malit and his classmates would spend two years in this unique environment studying archaeology, physical anthropology, urban anthropology, medical

anthropology, primatology, gender studies, electives involving writing and communication, and a variety of other courses.

Malit picked up on his new major quickly and thoroughly grasped the anthropological concepts being taught. He was finally able to define his collegiate major, anthropology, as the study of human biology, behavior, society, linguistics, and most importantly, culture. Yet, while Malit now understood the prevalent concepts of the field, he was still unaware of their application in the job market.



Photograph courtesy of Dr. Nasser Malit.



Dr. Nasser Malit digging a trench at a hominin site (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Nasser Malit).

This fear would only be exacerbated when protests broke out across universities in Kenya, shutting down all collegiate institutions and leaving students out of school for nine months.

The 8-4-4 program received a significant amount of funding from the United States government, allowing Kenyan students to attend university tuition-free. Yet, as elections within the U.S. changed seats in Congress, the new government officials began to crack down on funding for international institutions and students. The U.S. House and Senate expected Kenyan students to pay for university tuition on their own, which many students could not afford. Protests ensued, and classes came to a complete halt. For the nine months that the university was shut down, Malit was lost as to what to do. He lived with his family in Nairobi during this time period, looking for purpose.

One day, a member of Malit's family asked him to deliver a letter to a relative at the National Museum of Kenya, Nairobi (NMK). When Malit arrived, he walked into the center quad of the institution and encountered several signs on the side of the building.

One sign read, "Paleontology Department," and another that caught his eyes read, "Archaeology Department."

Caught off guard, Malit was surprised to see an organization that possessed his major and immediately saw an opportunity. He quickly delivered the letter and made his way to the archaeology department, where he was met by several employees. Malit inquired about potential jobs and was told there were only unpaid positions available. To Malit, the opportunity to work hard was ample enough reason alone to take an unpaid volunteer position within the institution. His first position in anthropology would be washing potsherds from excavation sites and writing accession cards.

After only two weeks in his new job at NMK, Malit would be approached by museum employees who noticed his aptitude for the position. Since he was working for free, one employee asked if Malit was from a rich background. Malit replied that he wasn't rich, but rather that he was originally from a rural village. And every night when he went home

Collegiate profile

to his family in Nairobi, he played scrabble with his cousin and brother. The employee suggested that Malit ask the head of the paleontology department if she had any paid positions available. Without any prior knowledge of the prestige associated with the individual he was about to approach, Malit made his way to the head of the paleontology office immediately.

The director was Dr. Maeve Leakey, a renowned paleoanthropologist who was an expert on hominid evolution. With only two weeks of anthropological work experience under his belt and a can-do attitude, Malit greeted Leakey in her office. He explained that he was a college student studying anthropology and was looking for opportunities during his time off from school. She was originally taken aback, not expecting his arrival and confident cadence. Being from a rural village, Malit felt no trouble speaking with anyone, whatever their reputation or background. Leakey found herself impressed by the young student's gutsiness and offered him a position on an upcoming excavation in the Kenyan Turkana Basin region. Although the position was unpaid, Malit would have his expenses covered in relation to food, transport, and coveted educational experience.

A few months after the excavation was completed, Dr. Leakey contacted Malit and asked him to come back to the museum. Malit excitedly returned and was curious as to why she reached out. Upon his arrival, Leakey ushered him into a room of skeletal casts and textbooks on human evolution. She saw potential in Malit and pushed him to constantly improve his grasp of the field through further study. This education qualified Malit for a variety of tasks

around the museum, and whenever the paleontology department had work that needed to be done, he would be the first to take it.

By 1996, Malit had graduated from college and was looking for work. He spent many hours sitting

in waiting rooms for interviews that sometimes didn't even call his name. After sitting in one waiting room for four hours, Malit was fed up and believed he would never find work. However, the National Museum of Kenya, Nairobi (NMK) called him once more upon hearing he had recently graduated. Malit was sent to the director's office, where he began to list the researchers he had previously worked with, including Leakey herself. A letter of employment was written almost immediately, and he was offered a job working with hominin fossils in the paleoanthropology vault. Malit would finally have a job that paid him for his work. While working in this new position, Malit would establish several connections. One such connection was with a reporter that would inaugurate a cornerstone of Malit's modern research.

In 1999, a freelance journalist by the name of Richard Kinyua walked into the National Museum of Kenya (NMK) in Nairobi holding a peculiar little object. This journalist was met by Nasser Malit, a young anthropologist who identified the object as a fossilized tooth. The tooth was further identified to be from an extinct ancient pig by Dr. Maeve Leakey,

Head of the Department of Paleontology, NMK. The find would go on to pique the combined interest of Nasser Malit and two other colleagues at the museum in visiting the site where the tooth was found. Their initial visit in the summer of 1999 led to the discovery

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of additional specimens and new archaeological and paleontological sites.

More recently, in 2019, after decades of searching the region, another site known as Ngobit was discovered. This new site was so promising that Dr. Malit and his colleagues sought funds to do fieldwork in the summer of 2021 during his sabbatical leave. The site at Ngobit has now produced countless finds.

Ngobit, located in the Central Highlands of Kenya, is a site found just outside the East African Rift System, unlike the many prehistoric sites in the East African region that are within the Rift System. The first attempt at radiometric dating of the site indicates that the Lower Tuff at the site dates to 700,000 Kya while the Upper Tuff dates to 500,000 Kya and is therefore of the Early to Middle Pleistocene in age. This location has produced over two hundred fossil specimens, including bovids, primates, carnivores, turtles, crocodiles, and other disarticulated remains. While all of the animal fossils recovered at the site are exciting and meaningful finds, there are some remains that stand out.

One notable find is the remains of an *Antidorcus*. The *Antidorcus* is an ancestor of the springbok, an antelope species native to South Africa. What's distinctive about the *Antidorcus* remains is that they were found in the East African Turkana Basin, thousands of miles away from their descendants, and will potentially be classified as a new species upon peer review. As ascertained from preexisting excavations, *Antidorcus* would go on to disappear from the Turkana Basin of the Kenyan region around one million years ago. If the dates from Ngobit are correct, the site would prove that *Antidorcus* survived in East Africa into the Middle Pleistocene 500,000 Kya. This new information would completely shift the anthropological perspective of this species and act as one of the first groundbreaking finds at Ngobit.

While the discovery of *Antidorcus* is unique, it is not the only significant find from Ngobit. As of right now, a skull fragment discovered last year has only received partial study and shares affinities with the Narmada (India) Herto and Omo 1 (Ethiopia) skulls of the late Pleistocene Age. The skull fragment also differs from *Homo erectus* in its affinities. Therefore, it can be determined that the skull fragment most likely came from an archaic *Homo sapiens*, which has yet to be confirmed. If proven, the

evolutionary history of humanity will dramatically change by over 200,000 years. The most recent confirmed remains of *Homo sapiens* were from 300,000 Kya in Jebel Ihoud, Morocco, while this skull fragment could date from 500,000 Kya to 700,000 Kya.

Also found within the Ngobit site is evidence of tool usage, including lithic artifacts that are consistent with advanced Oldowan and Middle Stone Age collections. These tools include hand axes and large points. The most exciting of these tools consist of Lupemban lanceolate points, which are rare in African archaeology. This technology is attributed to exploiting a forested habitat for resources. These finds demonstrate the potential for archaic *Homo sapiens* to exist

outside of the Rift Valley System during the Middle Pleistocene, as well as utilize tools and resources from this period.

As gathered from the site Ngobit, it is a unique and important location that possesses a wealth of anthropological information. Yet, such information is not the only part of this site that makes it so exceptional. The composition of the team of researchers was also extraordinary. To begin with, an alumnus of the Department of Anthropology at SUNY Potsdam, Mr. Ian McMahan, traveled to Kenya and volunteered on-site to help Dr. Malit during fieldwork last summer. He enjoyed his time and refined his knowledge in fieldwork while excavating, prospecting for fossils,

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and helping with mapping the site. The main body of the research team consisted of researchers from local Kenyan institutions such as the University of Nairobi, the Institute of Primate Research, and the National Museums of Kenya. The other researchers who participated in the fieldwork are of Kenyan origin, but currently work at US institutions including Mercer University in Georgia, Yale University, and SUNY Potsdam. All dating is also tested by the University of Oregon. As community outreach was of utmost importance, the project also employed local people. Two University of Nairobi students are currently involved in the project. Overall, Ngobit has now produced two potentially groundbreaking finds and an admirable team of researchers. We must now only demonstrate patience, as the true age of both the

Antidorcus and *Homo sapiens* species lies in peer review and further research.

Starting out as a visiting assistant professor, Dr. Malit has worked his way up the ranks at SUNY Potsdam over the past twelve years. Today he is an associate professor of anthropology, specializing in paleoanthropology and hominid evolution, as seen in his astonishing new research. Dr. Malit continues to make consistent trips to Kenya and hopes to return within the year 2022, since more information rests in the Turkana Basin, where Dr. Maeve Leakey first took him in 1993. Malit's story demonstrates an important lesson for everyone, especially young people struggling to find a career and purpose. Sometimes your career and purpose in life can find you.



Anthropology alumnus Ian McMahon helps with site survey and mapping (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Nasser Malit).

About the Author

Tyler Kocik is a senior at SUNY Potsdam majoring in Archaeology and Creative Writing. He is excited to be graduating in 2022 and beginning an internship at the Library of Congress, where he will be working with researchers in the Kluge Center.

How-to column

Creating an Online Museum Exhibit

LUIS TABOADA TORANZO



When someone thinks of a museum exhibit, the first thought that often comes to mind is a physical museum building like the Smithsonian or the Metropolitan. While this is true, there have been many technological advancements and improvements over time that have broadened the scope of possibility for virtual engagement, and museums reflect this change. Museum exhibits can be translated effectively onto the digital platform and have been on several occasions over the years. For example, the Smithsonian website has a variety of online exhibitions that people can visit from the comfort of their own homes. In recent years, the influence of digitalizing museums and historical environments has also surfaced in the video gaming industry. One video game company, Ubisoft, has leaned into creating a digitally educational experience in the last three releases of its popular Assassin's Creed franchise. With the addition of the Discovery Tour game mode feature, which is similar to a virtually guided museum tour, Ubisoft has added a historical setting in Origins, Odyssey, and Valhalla that provides an educational angle on the history and culture of each game's environment.

In short, museum exhibits are more accessible than ever – both when it comes to visiting them and creating them. Dr. Morgan Perkins teaches several classes about museum studies, one of which allows the students to work towards creating their own exhibit, or at the very least, a detailed concept for one. For example, "Museum Archives and Exhibits" is an upper division course usually offered by the SUNY Potsdam anthropology department during the spring semester that requires prior knowledge of museum studies. However, you can attempt to create your very own online exhibit at home. Just keep the following advice in mind:

1. What are your interests? What will the exhibit be about?

Start off by figuring out what your exhibit will investigate. Don't worry yet about how broad the potential topic may be; as you work on the exhibit, your views and ideas may shift and change in new directions or narrow your focus. This is as much a creative experience as it is a learning experience.

2. Know your audience.

Before you go any further, remember that the exhibit isn't just for you. An exhibit's purpose is to do exactly what its name implies: to display to the public. You should sit down and ask yourself, "who is my target audience, and how do I intend to convey the exhibit's information to them?" In fact, you should try to put yourself in the shoes of not only your target audience, but also those of other audiences for a wider reach. For example, if your exhibit focuses on the effects that a global pandemic has had on the mental health of individuals, you may want to ask: "how could I connect with people who have been directly affected by COVID-19?" Or "how do I shape my exhibit to reach people who were born after the pandemic occurred?" Also, "how can I approach audience members who cannot read?" or "what about audience members with disabilities?"

3. Insight, Research, and Outline.

Now it is time to get to work. Ask yourself how transparent you want to be with your audience. Is this a personal topic? Does it or has it affected you in some way? Do you want the exhibit to connect with the audience on a personal level? To paint a clearer picture, consider the following: When I first wrote my proposal to Dr. Perkins regarding the topic of my exhibit, I explained to him how the subject of Peru is very personal to me, given that I am Peruvian by birth. I had to ask myself while working on the exhibit if I wanted to share my personal experiences with the audience. Did I want to establish a personal connection with them through the exhibit? Or did I want to simply educate them on a topic I was passionate about?

Do some basic research. If the topic is still too broad, or you can't find enough information on it, this will help you pinpoint something more plausible. You might even start to look at things differently and want to try a different approach. For example, one of my classmates wanted to put together an exhibition on the history of museums. As he began to research the topic, he came across information on World's Fair events and opted to work on that instead. In my personal case, I was on the fence between an exhibit on the diverse culture of Peru and the Peruvian age of terror against the Shining Path and the lasting effects that it has had today. After doing research on both subjects and weighing my interests, I settled on exhibiting the diversity of Peruvian music and dance.

It is also important to work on an outline for your exhibition. Organize your thoughts and map out how you want the exhibit to look. What information comes first, what deserves more focus than the rest, etc.?

4. Deep Research.

Now that you have an organized concept for your exhibit, it is time to gather as much information about it as you can. Do keep in mind that research doesn't just mean reading journals and articles that other people wrote. Sometimes it can be a good idea to build your own information. For example, your exhibit focuses on a recent event or a specific community. In these cases, it could be extremely helpful to reach out to the people involved. Schedule an interview or even ask for advice on where to look for more information. Your research can also come from videos on the subject.

5. The Media!

Now that you have everything, you just need to set it all up and create a layout. There are several different formats, and each have their own unique benefits and drawbacks. A YouTube video is more accessible to the public. But organizing your thoughts, managing the length, and maintaining quality while video editing is a skillset all on its own. A website, on the other hand, can be just as easily promoted as a video, and has many resources to assist you. There are many services on the internet to choose from to assist you with building a website. I recommend exploring Weebly, Wix, Squarespace and WordPress.

Finally, do not be afraid to use YouTube! There are many tutorials available on YouTube to help you with building your website exhibit. Be creative and be yourself. Make your own unique and exclusive video for your exhibit! But don't lose sight of your goal. You want to attract your audience to your exhibit. Most importantly, have fun with it!

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Construction of HEARTH (Photograph by Jason Hunter).